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British Birds

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Identification of Western Reef and Little Egrets

Robert Spencer BA MSc (1923-1994)

Swinhoe's Storm-petrels: new to Britain and Ireland





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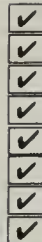
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Identification of Western Reef Egrets and dark Little Egrets

Philippe J. Dubois and Pierre Yésou

The Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* and the Little Egret *E. garzetta* are usually recognised as separate species (e.g. Cramp & Simmons 1977; Payne 1979; Hancock & Elliott 1978; Brown *et al.* 1982; Sibley & Monroe 1990), although their relationships are debated. Three, sometimes four, subspecies are described for the Little Egret, including *nigripes* from islands in southeast Asia and the southwest Pacific and *immaculata* from Australia. Only the nominate *garzetta*, which breeds sparsely in Europe, Asia and Africa, is considered in this paper. Two, sometimes three, subspecies have been recognised for the Western Reef Egret. All of them have a mainly coastal distribution and are dimorphic, with dark and white individuals occurring in the same population, together with intermediates in variable proportion: nominate *gularis* breeds in West Africa from Mauritania to Gabon, and *schistacea* (= *asha*) in East Africa from the Red Sea south to Kenya and eastwards to India and Sri Lanka. The form *dimorpha*, which breeds in Madagascar, Aldabra, Comoro Islands, Seychelles and locally in coastal East Africa from southern Kenya to Tanzania, is considered a race of either of the above species, or a species in its own right: the Dimorphic Egret *E. dimorpha* (Payne 1979), now known as the Mascarene Reef-Egret (Sibley & Monroe 1990).

Hancock (1984) and Hancock & Kushlan (1984) have argued that all these forms are subspecies of the Little Egret, on the assumption that interbreeding

occurs between *garzetta* and *schistacea* in India (Naik & Parasharya 1983; Parasharya & Naik 1987) and Kenya (Hancock & Kushlan 1984). No detail was given, however, on the identification of the individuals involved (but see Ashkenazi 1993), and interbreeding is highly surprising in India as Little and Western Reef Egrets have differing breeding seasons there (Naik *et al.* 1981). Voisin (1991) considered that interbreeding is yet to be confirmed. The fact is that the identification of the African and Asian forms remains poorly understood, particularly regarding the white individuals, which are more prone to be mistaken for Little Egrets, while the possibility of a rare dark morph of the Little Egret further complicates the matter. These are problems of concern not only for systematists, but also for birdwatchers in the southern part of the Western Palearctic: small numbers of Western Reef Egrets, both *gularis* and *schistacea*, regularly occur north of their range, from Israel to Morocco and also to the northern Mediterranean shores from Greece to Spain, with most western European records in France and Italy (Yésou & CHN 1986; Grussu & Poddesu 1989; Grussu 1993).

Here we discuss the field identification of Western Reef Egrets of the subspecies *gularis* and *schistacea* in comparison with *garzetta*, based on our field experience of these birds in Sénégal (PJD & PY), the Gambia (PJD), southern Mauritania (PY), Israel (PJD) and Bahrain (PY), often in close association with Little Egrets, and on discussion with observers who know the species from Djibouti, Egypt, northern Mauritania and Ivory Coast. We also present new information on the occurrence of dark individuals in European colonies of Little Egrets.

Description of Western Reef Egret

Size, silhouette and behaviour

Nominate *gularis* is rather similar in size to the Little Egret, and *schistacea* has on average larger measurements, although with much overlap (table 1). Birds of the latter race seen together with Little Egrets usually look bulkier, but not necessarily larger, and some individuals even look smaller.

Both subspecies have a proportionally longer and thinner neck than that of Little Egret, and tend to keep it more hooked or S-shaped: this distinctive shape is always well marked in the case of *schistacea*, and usually so but often to a lesser degree on *gularis*, giving these birds a serpentine silhouette reminiscent of an Intermediate Egret *E. intermedia* or a Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*.

Both *gularis* and *schistacea* usually show an angular head profile, with the bill and forehead almost in a line and a blunt outline to the rear of the head, while both the forehead and the crown tend to be more gently rounded on *garzetta*. Specific differences in head shape are not constant, however, and depend in part on the bird's behaviour and the effect of the wind.

The bill of Western Reef Egret is on average proportionally longer than Little's: again, the difference is more marked on *schistacea*, although it is not always obvious. There are also differences in bill shape, as discussed below, which again tend to be more obvious with *schistacea* than with *gularis*.

The outer wing is marginally shorter and more rounded on Western Reef Egret, the tip of the folded wing just reaching the tip of the tail; it can, however, also extend slightly beyond the tail, as it does on Little Egret. The more round-



75. Typical dark Western Reef Egret *Egretta* of race *schistacea*. Note heavy, dagger-shaped bill in line with forehead, and shape of rear head. Eilat, December 1992 (Pierre Yésou)



Plate 76. First-summer Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* of race *schistacea*. Note thick bill (compared with plate 77), especially at base, yellowish lores, short neck feathers and brown juvenile feathers on coverts and neck. Eilat, Israel, April 1994 (Philippe J. Dubois)



77. Typical dark Western Reef Egret *Egretta* of race *gularis*. Note more slender appearance than *schistacea*, with thinner bill, and presence of reddish brown juvenile coverts. Bignona, Sénégal, February 1988 (Philippe Delaporte)



Plate 78. Unidentified egret *Egretta*, with bare-patch coloration typical of Little Egret *E. garzetta*. Bill is relatively heavy, but still compatible with that species. Horizontal stance and, particularly, shape of neck, however, point to Western Reef Egret *E. gularis*, as does area of grey feathers behind eye. Bignona, Sénégal, February 1988 (Philippe Delaporte)

79. Below, dark first-winter Western Reef Egret *E. gularis* of race *gularis*. Variegated appearance due to retained bleached brown juvenile feathers contrasting with dark freshly moulted feathers. Ivory Coast, December 1986 (Thierry Bara)



Plate 80. Below, Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* of race *schistacea* in flight. Note large wings and silhouette recalling Intermediate Egret *E. intermedia*. Nabq, Sinai, Egypt, April 1994 (Philippe J. Dubois)



winged shape is more obvious in flight, when, combined with a stronger, less buoyant flight action and a stockier body, it makes a flying Western Reef Egret look more like a smallish Grey Heron *A. cinerea* or Great White Egret *E. alba* than a Little Egret. Again, the difference is more marked for *schistacea* than for *gularis*. Lastly, both forms often adopt a more horizontal stance when feeding or resting than does Little Egret.

The feeding actions of the two species reportedly differ, as foraging Western Reef Egrets not uncommonly perform 'wing-screening' (Cramp & Simmons 1977), also called 'double-wing feeding' (Kushlan 1978), as Black Herons *Hydranassa ardesiaca* often do. Little Egrets do, however, sometimes behave similarly (Hancock & Elliott 1978; Sueur 1979; Robert & Voisin 1991; pers. obs.). Ashkenazi (1993) considered Western Reef Egrets to be solitary feeders, which is not true: this species can be gregarious all over its range when the feeding conditions are favourable.

The Western Reef Egret tends to be coastal, frequenting various habitats from rocky shores to mudflats, while for Voisin (1991) 'the Little Egret is not a coastal bird' and usually forages more inland in deltas, marshes and lagoons. There is nevertheless some overlap in habitat use. Little Egrets regularly associate with rocky coasts and marine mudflats (e.g. in the northern part of their range around western France and southern Britain), and locally breed on sea cliffs in Spain (Bernis 1956), and on rocky islets off the French Channel coast (Bargain 1993), while Western Reef Egrets are locally common in inland marshes—not only mangroves—along the lower reaches of West African rivers.

Plumage

The white morph, in which the plumage is pure white, is usually rare in the case of *gularis*. Less than 1% of the Western Reef Egrets that we saw in Sénégal and in the Gambia were white. This morph is found in similar proportions on Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania (J. Trotignon, verbally), where the identity of the white breeding individuals is disputed: de Naurois (1969) called them *garzetta*, and said that they did not pair with dark individuals, but dark \times white pairs are currently under study there (B. Lamarche *in litt.*). White individuals are locally better represented farther south (e.g. in São Tomé and in Cameroon: Cramp & Simmons 1977). White individuals are far more common in the case of *schistacea*, usually accounting for at least 10% of the population and locally more than 50% in the northern part of the range (Cramp & Simmons 1977); in large samples identified to morph in Bahrain, 19% to 25% of individuals were white, a situation rather similar to that encountered from northern Egypt to Pakistan (E. Hirschfeld *in litt.*). Some juvenile and immature white-morph *schistacea* have pure white underparts, but on the rest of their body the white feathers are more or less strongly washed grey, sometimes giving a spotted effect (Naik & Parasharya 1983): such individuals are usually assigned to the 'intermediate' morph described below.

The dark morph of *gularis* is basically dark slate-grey, often with a bluish hue and sometimes looking blackish in the field, although dark Western Reef Egrets are much paler than Black Herons when the two species are seen together. A glossy blue or green tinge is visible on the head and upper breast of adults in some

lights, and their underparts are slightly tinged brown. The differences in tone between the different parts of the body are subtle, however, and visible only under favourable conditions. Juveniles are brown or dark grey-brown. Immatures are a shade paler than adults, lack any gloss, and may show browner wings owing to retained juvenile feathers. The only parts of the plumage which are always white in both adults and immatures are the chin and, to a variable extent, the upper throat and lower ear-coverts. Also, there is often a white patch more or less developed on either one wing or both, formed by white primary coverts and, more rarely, the bastard wing, and a few white feathers occasionally occur on any part of the body, but perhaps most frequently on the head and wings.

Dark individuals of the race *schistacea* are often paler than dark *gularis*, being ash-grey, often with a lavender tinge, or sometimes dark grey. The white areas are the same as on *gularis*, although white wing patches extending to the primaries have sometimes been reported from India (Naik & Parasharya 1983).

Individuals intermediate between the white and dark morphs show a variety of plumages. They often have the upperparts a paler ash-grey than those of dark individuals, and the belly and lower breast whitish. This pale area often extends to the front part of the neck and to a variable degree to the flanks, which, together with the sides of the neck, can be mottled grey-and-white. This kind of plumage is not uncommon on *schistacea*, but is rare on *gularis*, at least in the northern part of its range. Also, some grey-backed individuals have a white head, a feature seemingly always associated with pale grey to whitish underparts and neck, and a very large white area on the outer wing: not exceptional in the case of *schistacea* (Naik & Parasharya 1983; pers. obs.), but rare for *gularis*. In another kind of intermediate plumage, which we know only for *gularis*, most of the head, neck and body is white, often with limited dark speckling on the back and flanks, while the wings are mainly grey, often with a few white feathers.

It remains unclear whether adults show such varied plumages or whether they are restricted to immatures, and it is supposed that some intermediate immatures may turn into dark adults (E. Hirschfeld *in litt.*), although this needs confirmation.



Plate 81. Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis schistacea*. Typical silhouette, with long, relatively thin, 'hooked' neck and proportionally short bill in line with forehead. Hurghada, Egypt, May 1990 (Olivier Pineau)



82 & 83. Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta*



84 & 85. Grey egrets *Egretta*, probably and certainly Little Egrets *E. garzetta*
86. Below, Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* and Western Reef Egrets *E. gularis*



Bill

The bill of the Western Reef Egret differs from that of Little Egret in being usually thicker, with a different shape. The basal two-thirds of the mandibles are more parallel-edged before tapering to a point either almost symmetrically or with the distal part of the upper mandible markedly downcurved: then the bill may look either dagger-shaped (Hancock & Elliott 1978) or with the culmen downcurved to a greater or lesser extent (Wassink 1978; Jonsson 1992). This particular shape is usually obvious on *schistacea*, which also often have a proportionally longer bill. West African *gularis* have a shorter and less thick bill: while some individuals have a distinctive bill shape, others can hardly be told from Little Egret in this respect.

Breeding adult *gularis* has a black bill (Hancock & Kushlan 1984), whereas *schistacea* has either a yellow or, more rarely, a black one (Parasharya & Naik 1987). The colour varies considerably among non-breeding adults and immatures of both subspecies. Some have a blackish, dark brown or reddish-brown bill, with the base of the lower mandible often a paler brown to pinkish. On others, the bill is paler, horn-coloured or yellowish, sometimes pale pinkish-brown, either plain or with darker brown areas at the base of the upper mandible or extending along the edge of both mandibles.

Adult Little Egret has a dark bill throughout the year, although it can be somewhat paler at the base in winter. Only exceptionally do breeding Little Egrets show a pale, yellowish bill. The bills of immatures are a paler brown, often with a pinkish area at the base of the lower mandible, and a minority of young Little Egrets have one mandible or both very pale, from fleshy-horn to straw-yellow (Yésou 1984; Cope & Cayford 1988; Voisin 1991). Thus, the bill colour of young Little Egrets can be similar to that of Western Reef Egrets.

Legs

Both *gularis* and *schistacea* have on average a shorter tarsus than that of Little Egret, and some Western Reef Egrets look obviously shorter-legged. Although

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Plate 82. Top left, typical adult Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, but showing pale legs, a feature uncommon for an adult of this species. Bignona, Sénégal, February 1988 (Philippe Delaporte)

Plate 83. Top right, atypical adult Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* with bare-part coloration reminiscent of Western Reef Egret *E. gularis schistacea*. Silhouette and bill shape, however, rule out latter species. Such pale bare-part colour is not uncommon on juvenile and first-winter Little Egrets, but is exceptional on adults. Camargue, France, July 1993 (Olivier Pineau)

Plate 84. Centre left, grey egret *Egretta*, probably Little Egret *E. garzetta*. Note pale base of bill and white head and upper neck (which does, however, have rather an S-shape). La Tapa, Cadiz, Spain, August 1987 (M. Fernandez Cruz)

Plate 85. Centre right, grey Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*. Silhouette, including neck and bill shape, rules out Western Reef Egret *E. gularis*. Uniformly scaled wing feathers indicate a bird of the year. Note pale lower mandible and greenish legs, not rarely found on Little Egrets of this age. Camargue, France, September 1986 (Guy Morel)

Plate 86. Bottom, mixed flock of feeding Little *Egretta garzetta* and Western Reef Egrets *E. gularis gularis*. Dakar, Sénégal, February 1988 (Philippe Delaporte)



The inclusion of plates 75-80 and 82-86 in colour was subsidised by Carl Zeiss Ltd, sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Table 1. Measurements (in mm) of Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and Western Reef Egret *E. gularis gularis* and *E. gularis schistacea*.

Mean, sample size (in parentheses) and range (age and sex combined). (a) Cramp & Simmons (1977); (b) Hiraldo Cano (1971) and Bernis (1971), combined; (c) Vaurie (1965); (d) Ashkenazi (1993 & *in litt.*). Note that tarsus-to-bill ratio helps to separate *gularis*, but hardly *schistacea*, from *garzetta*.

		<i>garzetta</i>	<i>gularis</i>	<i>schistacea</i>
MEASUREMENTS				
Wing	(a)	276 (34) 245-303	265 (23) 244-285	—
	(b)	274 (15) 248-300.5	270 (12) 258-285	—
	(c)	—	277 (10 males)	288 (10) 272-311
	(d)	281 (72) 198-308	—	297 (10) 270-345
Bill	(a)	82 (34) 67-93	83.8 (21) 79-89	—
	(b)	85 (15) 79-95	84.4 (13) 79-91	—
	(c)	—	—	98 (10) 94-103
	(d)	89 (77) 72-98	—	98.2 (10) 92-106
Tarsus	(a)	99.2 (34) 78-112	89.8 (19) 82-94	—
	(b)	104.1 (15) 97-115	90.2 (13) 83-92	—
	(c)	—	—	104 (10) 92-116
	(d)	103.8 (77) 84-115	—	110.6 (10) 105-118
RATIOS				
bill/tarsus	(b)	0.82 (14) 0.77-0.87	0.93 (13) 0.86-0.96	—
tarsus/bill	(c)	1.22 (37) 1.05-1.42	1.06 (19) 0.90-1.17	—
	(d)	1.17 (73) 1.03-1.38	—	1.13 (10) 1.02-1.27

particularly noticeable in the eastern population, this character is, however, not constant, as there is much individual variation and overlap in measurements.

Breeding adults of both species have black legs with yellow feet and lower tarsus, turning orange or red at the peak of courtship (Cramp & Simmons 1977; Hancock 1984; Parasharya & Naik 1987; Voisin 1991). The feet and lower tarsus are sometimes a greenish yellow on non-breeding adult Little Egrets. Exceptionally, adults have wholly pale legs, yellowish to greenish-grey, either in winter or within a breeding colony (plates 82 & 83).

The legs of non-breeding Western Reef Egrets (whether adults or immatures) are much more variable in colour. On *gularis*, the basic colour is a dull brown, with plain yellowish extending from the foot to about the lower one-third of the leg, and yellowish spots of variable size and number often occur on the brown part. Legs tend to be paler on *schistacea* from the Red Sea and Persian Gulf: sometimes dark to medium brown with yellowish to greenish-yellow feet and lower tarsus, but often mostly olive-green or yellowish with darker brown markings on the upper leg. In India, the legs are black and remain so on non-breeding adults according to Parasharya & Naik (1987), with yellow extending from the feet to the distal end of the tarsus.

A few juvenile and immature Little Egrets are pale-legged (usually light green, but also brown-green to yellow) and in this respect strongly recall some Western Reef Egrets (Alibone 1981; Sueur 1982; Yésou 1984; Cope & Cayford 1988).

Lores

The skin on the lores of the Western Reef Egret is basically yellowish to greenish-

yellow, sometimes greenish to olive-green or bluish-green, turning pale yellow (or even more briefly red) for a short period during mating (Cramp & Simmons 1977; Hancock & Elliott 1978; Hancock 1984; Parasharya & Naik 1987). Little Egrets usually have greyish lores, which turn bright during courtship: either orange to reddish, or bluish-rose to lilac-rose, according to the terminology used respectively by Voisin (1977) and O. Pineau (*in litt.*), who studied the same population in Camargue.

Hancock & Elliott (1978) considered that the grey lores of Little Egrets were a distinction worth mentioning between the two species, and this has been repeated in recent identification literature (e.g. Lewington *et al.* 1991). Unfortunately, the situation is not so straightforward. A greenish or bluish tinge is sometimes visible on the facial skin of Little Egret, which also, even if rarely, can be yellowish (Lewington *et al.* 1991; pers. obs.). More importantly, non-breeding *schistacea* commonly have greyish lores and, among hundreds of non-breeding *gularis* examined carefully in West Africa at all times of the year, almost all had greyish, often blue-grey, lores and were indistinguishable from Little Egrets on this character: only a tiny minority of non-breeding *gularis* in fact shows yellow lores.

Dark Little Egrets

Dark Little Egrets have been claimed since the last century (e.g. Berlioz 1949; Mock 1980), but their occurrence is so rare and the given proof so scanty that the reality of their existence has repeatedly been questioned since Payne (1979) considered that the dark egrets seen in southern France, Sicily and Hungary probably referred to *E. gularis*.

Only three specimens have been traced in museum collections (Yésou & CHN 1986; Voisin 1991). One collected in 1956 in southern Spain (Bernis 1956) and discussed below is in fact either a hybrid *garzetta* × *gularis* or a pure *gularis*. Another, caught in Hungary in 1964, was identified as a Little Egret 'of African origin' (Fábián & Sterbetz 1964-65): its measurements, however, make clear that it is a Western Reef Egret (Yésou & CHN 1986; Voisin 1991). Only the third specimen, collected in Bulgaria before 1876, possibly in 1869, and housed in the Natural History Museum of Cobourg, Germany, may be a true Little Egret from the photograph published (von Boetticher 1952) and the measurements given (Voisin 1991), which agree only with *garzetta* or *schistacea*, while the bill shape is not in favour of the latter race. Furthermore, it had a grey body but white head, neck and wings (Rivoire 1956), which would be an odd combination for a Western Reef Egret.

Sight records of claimed dark Little Egrets have also been published, most of them listed by Yésou & CHN (1986), Grussu & Poddesu (1989) and Grussu (1993): the descriptions have not always allowed a precise identification, however, or have been reinterpreted in favour of Western Reef Egret.

For these reasons, and also because no dark offspring had then been reported from the heronries where many young Little Egrets have been handled for ringing or biological study, particularly in Spain and France, the existence of a dark morph of the Little Egret has been considered doubtful (Yésou & CHN 1986; Grussu & Poddesu 1989), at least before the measurements of the Cobourg specimen were known. Its existence is still considered doubtful by Grussu (1993)

and, once she had examined the Cobourg specimen, Voisin (1991) nevertheless concluded that 'further specimens are needed to be quite sure that [such a dark morph] does, in fact, occur'.

There was a new development in July 1991 when, in the course of a monitoring scheme of Little Egrets breeding in Camargue, France, O. Pineau (*in litt.*) and his colleagues found a uniformly pale grey nestling, together with three white ones, in the nest of a white pair. The grey offspring was similar in proportions to young Little Egrets of the same age. In 1992 and 1993, this ringed grey individual was observed in Camargue again, and its colour led the unwary to confuse it with a Grey Heron. In July 1992, another uniformly grey juvenile, born of unknown parents, was found in Camargue, in another colony, where in 1993 a slaty-grey egret identified as *gularis* bred with a white mate and had three young which looked white at a distance (O. Pineau *in litt.*).

Ashkenazi (1993) then reported on the existence of rare dark Little Egrets, this time in Israel, where up to seven different dark individuals were found in one year among the population numbering 3,000 in the Huleh Valley, thus accounting for about 0.2% of the local population. Their plumage was described as 'variable from light grey to almost black and from uniform cover to small dark patches without bilateral symmetry', with no further detail. The fact that only Western Reef Egrets of the race *schistacea* occur in the area should theoretically allow an easy separation of the two species on their silhouette, and particularly the shape of their bill and neck. Unfortunately, the identification process appears also to have referred to other features, such as bare-part coloration and behaviour, which are not so reliable as Ashkenazi thought: on this basis, confirmation is needed that no stray Western Reef Egret has been included within the records of Huleh Valley dark-morph Little Egrets, and proper, more detailed descriptions would be welcome in order to establish accurately the range of plumage darkness shown by Israeli *garzetta*.

In France and Spain, too, and particularly in Camargue, a few dark individuals, similar to the Little Egret in general silhouette and bill shape, have been observed in recent years. Some were almost entirely pale grey, while others were 'pied', with a plumage resembling that of intermediate *schistacea*: wings and back pale grey, neck and head a paler grey or white, belly off-white to white. One such individual frequented a colony in 1988 and another bred near Camargue in 1992 (O. Pineau *in litt.*). These birds are surely not *schistacea*, which always shows a distinctive silhouette owing to its bulkier body, shorter legs, more serpentine neck, broader curved bill, or at least a combination of some of these characters. They probably are not *gularis* either, as, although this subspecies sometimes looks very much like *garzetta* in silhouette, it rarely shows this kind of plumage. These observations thus suggest the existence of a very rare dark (actually pale grey, either uniform or pied) morph among West European Little Egrets.

Discussion

A dark adult female egret in breeding condition was collected in June 1956 in a colony in the Guadalquivir, southern Spain, where one or two other similarly plumaged birds were seen in the same period. Identified as a Western Reef Egret

by Sáez-Royuela & Valverde (1956), the individual collected was thought to be a Little Egret by Bernis (1956), who, however, later changed his opinion (Bernis 1971): its measurements agree with those of both *garzetta* and *gularis*, although more in favour of the latter. Also, the colour of its bill points to a Western Reef Egret. Thus it was reidentified as either a hybrid *garzetta* × *gularis*, or possibly a pure *gularis*. Two dark individuals were seen again in the Guadalquivir in June 1970: one was collected and shown to be *gularis* (Hiraldó Cano 1971). Meanwhile, dark egrets were breeding in the same area in 1960 and 1962 (Mertens 1961; Fábíán & Sterbetz 1964-65). In 1988, ornithologists from the University of Sevilla observed eight dark egrets in colonies at Coria del Río, south of Sevilla, Spain, including at least one dark pair which produced a grey young showing the typical white wing-patches of the Western Reef Egret (O. Pineau *in litt.*).

In Camargue, a grey egret was paired with a white one in 1958, producing two grey young (Fábíán & Sterbetz 1964-65). One slaty-grey egret, whose identification as *gularis* was agreed upon by the French rarities committee, has been observed there every spring and summer since 1987; it possibly bred in 1990 and certainly did in 1992.

These repeated observations of proved or suspected Western Reef Egrets in colonies of Little Egrets give credit to the hypothesis that some *gularis* may have occasionally interbred with *garzetta* (Bernis 1971). The presence of a grey young in the nest of apparently typical Little Egrets may then be the expression of hybrid lineage. This, however, remains speculative: the frequency of pied or pale grey 'Little Egrets' seen in France in recent years is probably too high in relation to the very low possible occurrence of mixed pairing between Little and stray Western Reef Egrets, thus suggesting that at least some of these odd-coloured birds are not hybrids but pure *garzetta*, and that the occasional appearance of dark Little Egrets is not limited to one colony in Israel.

The laconic description of Israeli birds suggests that melanism could be even more marked in this species than shown by the grey and pied individuals observed in France: the possibility of a really dark Little Egret would further complicate the identification of any out-of-place dark egret. Were the existence of hybrids to be proved, it would similarly complicate the matter.

In any case, when identifying a dark egret, the greatest attention must be given to the structure of the bird, particularly the shape of its neck, the shape and size of its bill, and the proportions of its legs. The structure of *schistacea* always allows the identification of this well-differentiated form, which is as different from the other two as are many bird species. Structure is also often greatly helpful in separating *gularis*, even if individuals of this race can be close to *garzetta* in many respects, especially in silhouette. Bare-parts coloration is also important, although this mostly helps identification of adults, since young Little Egrets occasionally show the same bare-parts colour as Western Reef Egrets.

Conversely, a white *gularis* can sometimes be very difficult to assess, since some individuals are very similar to Little Egrets in structure and in colour of bare parts. We can only hope that further research will help overcome this difficulty. Further information from the colonies where pied or grey egrets breed or are reared in southern Europe may help us to understand what these birds are.

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Summary

The identification of Western Reef Egrets *Egretta gularis* of the subspecies *gularis* and *schistacea* is discussed, and information is given on the occurrence of 'dark' (usually pale grey or pied, but sometimes almost black) Little Egrets *E. garzetta*. Western Reef Egrets of the race *schistacea*, although very variable in appearance, are easily separated from Little Egrets by a combination of structural characters. Many nominate *gularis* share these diagnostic characters, while others resemble the Little Egret much more, up to a point where some white individuals can be very difficult to tell from Little. A few dark Little Egrets have been found in Israel. Pale grey or pied egrets with a plumage resembling *gularis* or *schistacea*, but with a shape and structure typical of *garzetta*, have also been found in France and Spain in recent years. Some of these are probably melanistic Little Egrets rather than hybrids between Little and Western Reef Egrets, although various observations in Spain and southern France suggest that mixed pairing may occasionally occur, and be productive. The existence of rare melanistic *garzetta*, and the possibility of occasional hybridisation, further complicate the identification of any stray Western Reef Egret.

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Dr Philippe J. Dubois, LPO, 2 rue Mozart, 92200 Nanterre, France

Pierre Yésou, Office National de la Chasse, 53 rue Russeil, 44000 Nantes, France



LOOKING BACK

In July 1970, two new members were elected to the Rarities Committee: R. A. Richardson and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, and it was noted that records of Arctic Redpolls *Carduelis hornemanni* would be considered only if the bird or birds concerned had been examined in the hand. (*Brit. Birds* 63: 267-268)

'Redpolls *Acanthis [Carduelis] flammea* continue to be greatly on the increase as a breeding species, especially in the Midlands and East Anglia.' (July 'Recent reports', *Brit. Birds* 63: 352)

'In June, 1942, I was walking down the side of the Severn in Gloucestershire with a man who lives on the river bank and has quite a good knowledge of birds, and we located seven Corn-Crakes [*Crex crex*] in a distance of perhaps five miles. In one case my companion's dog brought an egg to us in his mouth and in another a dead young bird. His owner told me that this happens every year and he is unable to prevent the dog doing it.' (*Brit. Birds* 38: 278-279, July 1945)



OBITUARY

Robert Spencer BA MSc (1923-1994)

Bob Spencer, who died on 21st September 1994 at the age of 71, was a national figure in the ornithological scene for 40 years. He joined the staff of the British Trust for Ornithology in 1954 as its first professional head of the Bird Ringing Scheme, following the retirement of Miss Elsie Leach, who for many years had occupied the role in a voluntary capacity.

During the next 30 years, Bob was to preside over the many developments which resulted in the bird-ringing technique becoming the major ornithological research tool which it is recognised to be today. He initiated many changes in the quality and durability of materials, and in trapping, handling, ageing and sexing techniques to maximise the value of information obtained, yet always preached—and taught—a proper concern for the welfare of the bird in the hand. Amongst the first to use imported Japanese mist-nets, he drew on his own experiences with them to draw up a code of conduct (under the aegis of the BTO's Bird Ringing Committee) for their use by British ringers; he dealt firmly with any instances of carelessness which came to his attention. When cannon-netting and rocket-netting techniques were devised, he insisted on there being operating rules (with the birds' welfare in mind) for those who wished to use them in conjunction with BTO rings—withdrawal of which was the ultimate sanction. He refined the system of bird-ringing licences and devised strict training standards, to ensure that ringers operated within their individual levels of experience and competence.

Bird rings were redesigned to make them safer, yet more durable. Always the well-being of the bird—in the hand and after release—was a primary consideration: Bob saw clearly that ringing was justified or worthwhile only when the results could provide reliable and unbiased data for analysis, which required unharmed and unhandicapped subjects. Ringers were taught and encouraged to maximise the opportunities when a bird was captured; detailing moult and measurements became a stepping stone to ageing and sexing, which were seen as essential in using ringing data for studies of population structure. Bob saw that ringers re-trapping their own birds in subsequent seasons were able to provide data of greater worth than the small percentage of 'exciting' distant recoveries. This led him to advocate in Britain the concept of the Constant Effort Site, to which he had been introduced in Germany, and which he developed during his own field-work around Tring. In time, this became an integral part of British ringing philosophy.

It is no exaggeration to say that, during Bob's reign over the BTO Ringing Office, the 'ringing scene' in Britain (and in Ireland, where he went out of his way to encourage growth) changed out of all recognition. These changes were reflected in quantity (a ten-fold increase in ringing totals), in methodology and documentation (which led inevitably to computerisation), in approach (planned population-oriented projects superseding random ringing), and in analytical scope (encouraging ringers to use their own data, as well as making the national database available to students and professionals). Though not himself a prolific contributor to the scientific literature (regretting his poor grounding in statistical methodology), Bob's concepts are nevertheless being put to good use by others,

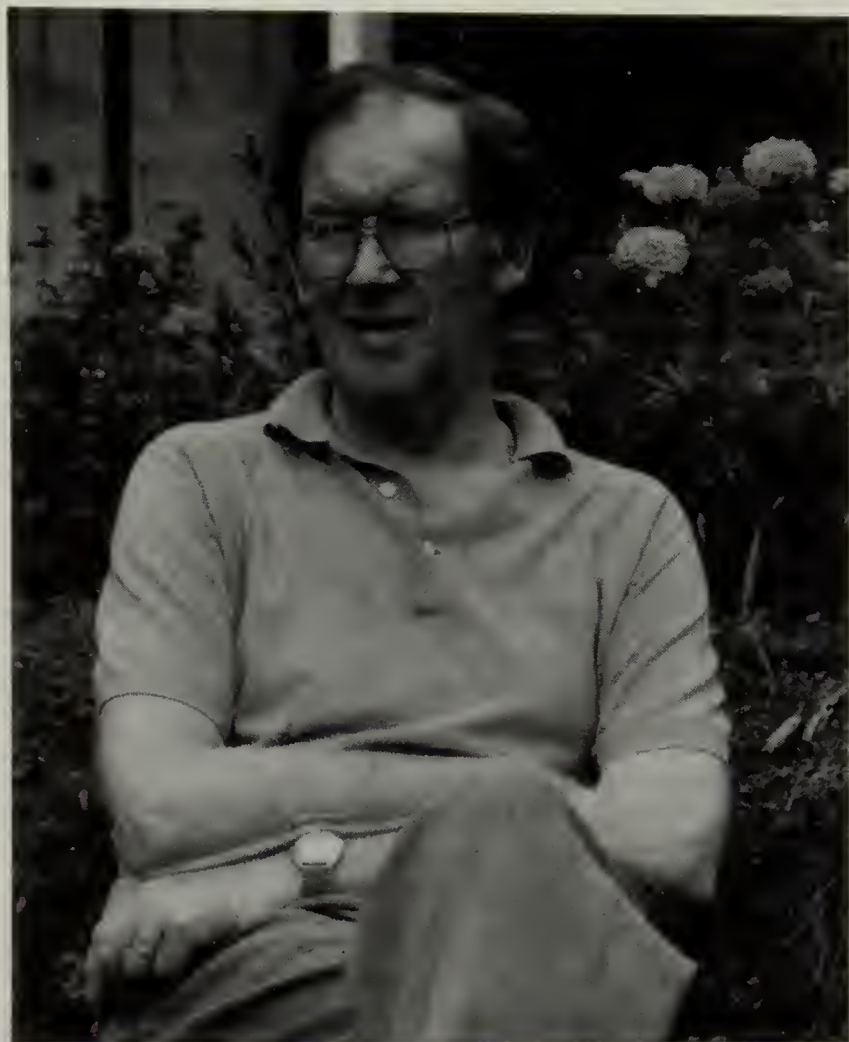


Plate 87. Bob Spencer, Hertfordshire, August 1982 (*Alison Spencer*)

aided by this major reorganisation and upgrading of ringing as a scientific method.

Bob was born on 12th March 1923 into a Quaker family, and was brought up in Cheshire, where he attended King's School in Macclesfield. He was of the generation to be caught up in the Second World War, and spent four years (1942-46) in the Royal Navy, where he once had his ship torpedoed and sunk under him in the Mediterranean. On demobilisation, he entered Durham University, where he took a BA in general studies; later in life, he was to be awarded an Honorary MSc by his old university in recognition of his work in ornithology.

After graduation, he chose teaching for a career, took a Diploma in Education, and obtained a post in Chelmsford, Essex, where he specialised in English Language and Literature. It was there that I met him in 1951—as teacher and pupil. One of Bob's early steps was to found a school natural history society, and he soon had us parading the seawalls of Essex, teaching us how to identify the birds we saw. When he obtained his own BTO ringing permit at this time, his infectious enthusiasm had his pupils helping to a degree which would now be impossible owing to Bob's subsequent tightening of the licensing system. The Romford Ringing Station was founded in the early 1950s, and duly became widely known for its experiments with trapping methods and its adaptations of

bird-observatory techniques (such as moult-recording and the collection of ectoparasites) to an inland trapping station. By now, ornithology had become more attractive to Bob than teaching; and soon afterwards (in 1954) he applied successfully for the newly created BTO post of Ringing Officer. Five years later, I was to join him as his assistant.

With his teaching background, lecturing came naturally to him. As an informed and confident speaker, he was much in demand, and to a large extent became the public face of the BTO. For some years, he was a regular contributor to BBC radio natural history programmes; and for more years than he cared to remember he ran ornithological evening classes at Morley College, which brought numerous amateur birders into the BTO's fold. Bob understood well that the BTO was indeed the sum of its members, and did all that he could to encourage their participation in projects and meetings. Himself a regular participant in the Trust's two (sometimes three) annual conferences at Swanwick, his approachability, friendliness and genuine interest in what others were doing, and his readiness to offer advice and encouragement, made him a popular figure.

There was also an international aspect to Bob's thinking. He was a regular attendee of international ornithological congresses, participated in major expeditions to Spain, Bulgaria, Jordan and Morocco, and lost no opportunity to establish long-term contacts with ringing and migration workers in other countries—visiting them whenever he could. Thus it was that Bob had a considerable role in the founding (in 1963) of the European Committee for Bird Ringing (EURING), which led to the establishment of a centralised databank of European ringing recoveries, housed in the Netherlands. Now that we are all so used to the idea of European co-operation, it is hard to visualise the problems which were presented in the early years and which it needed great tact and patient persuasion to overcome.

These last attributes Bob possessed in large measure. When he retired in 1983, by then being the Trust's Director of Services, he returned to his beloved Cumbria, but not to inactivity: he was pressed into taking over the secretaryship of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, whose annual reports he compiled for 1983-93. Though the Panel had then been in existence for nigh on a dozen years, it was still held in suspicion by a few fieldworkers and recorders who feared that centralised collection and summary publication of sensitive information might lead to security breaches. This had not ever happened, but fears persisted in some quarters. With his reputation for tact and integrity, Bob was able to persuade most such doubters to co-operate with the RBBP, the reputation of which was enhanced by his stewardship. He was elected as an Honorary Subscriber to *British Birds* in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 504).

Only Bob's close friends were aware of the true nature of his protracted last illness, but a much wider circle had reason to mourn his passing.

Bob Hudson

Contributions to The Robert Spencer Memorial Fund, to provide help for amateur ringers, may be sent to Alison McLeod, BTO, The National Centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.



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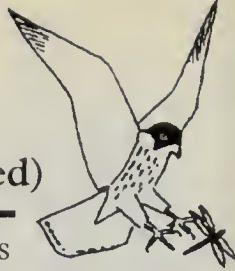
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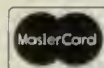
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REVIEWS

Handbook of the Birds of the World. vol. 2: New World vultures to guineafowl.

Edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott & Jordi Sargatal.

Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, 1994. 640 pages; 60 colour plates; 302 colour photographs; 590 distribution maps. ISBN 84-87334-15-6. £98.00.

With only a two-year gap since volume 1, this monumental handbook maintains momentum. This second volume is only slightly smaller than the first, and the general standard is just as high. The illustrations (60 colour plates) are by ten artists, but the styles blend together very well; most are by Ian Willis (13), Norman Arlott (12) and Francesc Jutglar (ten). The limitations (mostly only adults illustrated, and often only adult males) are inevitably the same as those in volume 1, but this is not primarily an identification guide, but a review of the whole spectrum of variety within the World's birds. The colour photographs have been selected with great care and the majority are stunning, and so is the quality of reproduction.

With exceedingly readable general texts covering many aspects of the biology, behaviour, ecology, status, relationship with Man, and so on, and succinct species accounts, each with a useful bibliography, this

series of volumes will inevitably become the standard general reference work. It is not cheap, but it is superb value for money.

In such a large book, crammed with so many facts, there must inevitably be some errors somewhere. I was not, however, able to find any when perusing the book for this review. I am merely filled with admiration at the size of the task which has been completed so competently, and the quality of both the illustrative and the written material.

Volume 1 was voted 'The "British Birds" Best Bird Book of the Year' in 1993 (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 86: 190-191) and this second volume, covering all the raptors and all the gamebirds, is of the same impressively high standard. If you can possibly afford to do so, I strongly recommend that you buy volume 1, volume 2 and each new one as it appears.

J. T. R. Sharrock

Where to Watch Birds in South America.

By Nigel Wheatley.

Christopher Helm, London, 1994. 432 pages; over 50 line-drawings; 105 site maps. ISBN 0-7136-3909-1. Hbk £14.99.

To attempt a site guide for the whole continent of South America, part of Antarctica and the Galapagos, Falkland, Trinidad and Tobago islands is a very ambitious undertaking in a single small volume. The author is, however, to be congratulated on producing a very useful and detailed guidebook.

A fascinating ten-page introduction covers, in league-table form, the country sizes, species totals, endemic totals, top-ten site lists, and much more.

For each of the 18 countries covered, there is an outline map showing the main localities and a general introduction dealing with such

topics as Getting Around; Accommodation and Food; Health and Safety; Climate and Timing; and Endemic Species.

The book provides detailed coverage of 206 of the best sites, with some 105 site maps, lists of the endemic species and specialities and access information.

With over 3,000 species, South America supports far more birds than any other continent and sooner or later must attract the World lister. Do not be without this book if you intend to make a visit.

David Chugston

An Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Bedfordshire 1988-92.

By R. A. Dazley & P. Trodd.

Bedfordshire NHS, 1994. 280 pages; 119 line-drawings; over 200 distribution maps. ISBN 0-950-6521-48. £19.95.

The value of a breeding-bird atlas is greatly increased when it can be compared directly with

an earlier survey, and the new atlas for Bedfordshire is a splendid example of this.

Having been heavily involved in the original atlas in 1968-77, I found the results of this later one utterly fascinating. The introductory chapters on the methodology of fieldwork and analysis and on the geology and geography of Bedfordshire are very well written, and the later sections discussing the historical ornithology of the county and the changes demonstrated by comparison of the two atlases are both succinct and stimulating.

A total of 119 species is included in the main body of the book, using the now-standard format of a double-page spread. The populations of 38 have increased, 48 have decreased, 28 are stable, two gamebirds are supplemented

by releases, and three species are not yet established. Most of the increases are to be welcomed, particularly Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* and Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, but the considerable increases in feral goose populations give cause for concern. Many decreases were predictable and all are regrettable. Hopefully, conservationists can use these invaluable data, at county and national levels, to promote beneficial changes in land-use, farming and forestry practices and the long-term management of mineral-extraction sites.

Well produced, good value for money: highly recommended.

Nick Dymond

Terns of Europe and North America.

By Klaus Malling Olsen & Hans Larsson.

Christopher Helm, London, 1995. 224 pages; 41 colour plates; 208 colour photographs; 7 figures and 23 distribution maps. ISBN 0-7136-4056-1. £24.99.

This book, describing 23 species of terns, has a smaller format than the previous books in the Helm Identification Guides and also differs in the inclusion of colour photographs.

The text is packed with useful information, and pleasingly concentrates on the more difficult non-breeding plumages. The sections on moult are particularly easy to follow, but the very detailed sections on measurements may not be utilised by most observers. Geographical variation and hybrids are also described.

Hans Larsson's artwork is of a very high standard. Each plate features birds of a single species, which makes comparison between species more difficult, but it is a delight to see

so many plumages illustrated. The occasional plates of mainly white terns on white backgrounds do not perhaps work so well as others.

The photographs are generally of good quality, complementing the text well, but there are a couple of pictures where the captions have been switched.

There is much new and useful information in this well-produced book, and tern identification has been greatly advanced by it. Although not really a pocket guide, it is the sort of book that I shall keep nearby for handy reference and I shall enjoy using it.

David Kramer

Birds of Pembrokeshire: status and atlas of Pembrokeshire birds.

By Jack Donovan & Graham Rees.

Dyfed Wildlife Trust, 1994. 180 pages; 99 distribution maps; 43 line-drawings. ISBN 0-902794-02-7. £17.95.

This large book, with an atmospheric Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* on the cover (but no colour inside), reviews Pembrokeshire birds with the benefit of tetrad maps of breeding birds in 1984-88 (using the familiar three-sizes-of-dot presentation). Tables detail numbers of some breeding species (mostly seabirds), wintering waterfowl and sample wildfowl and wader counts, and histograms illustrate migration at Skokholm and Strumble Head. Thus, it presents information concisely and comprehensively, despite rather short species accounts.

Rarities get little space, reflecting their relative importance, but not, perhaps, their interest to potential readers (they are insignificant, but

I would have liked a little more about Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*, which has occupied a burrow on Skomer, Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*, Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*, Little Swift *Apus affinis*, Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri* and Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca*, among other cracking rarities). As each family starts on a fresh page, some of these take a whole page for half a dozen short lines: now they have taken an excessive amount of space in this review.

Short chapters detail sites, habitats, conservation and a historical review of Pembrokeshire birdwatching. The bulk, however, is properly concerned with the systematic list

and is full of detail, often put in a broader local, national or international context. I learn that numbers of Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra* build up in nearby Carmarthen Bay in spring, but no daytime spring passage is noted in Pembrokeshire, implying that they move at night; that the rocky coastline of the county has only 250 wintering Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* (and just 96 pairs of Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*, which surprises me), while Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* still fly west over the isles and a Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* was once seen

clinging to the only wooden object on Grassholm.

Pembrokeshire has special birds—Red-billed Chough, Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* and Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*—and special places, such as Grassholm, Skomer and Strumble Head, ingredients in a menu to be sampled as often as possible. This book provides explanatory notes to help you interpret and enjoy whatever may tempt you.

Rob Hume

The Video Guide to British Birds. 4th edn. vols 1-5. 1 divers to ducks; 2 birds of prey to phalaropes; 3 skuas to woodpeckers; 4 larks to flycatchers; 5 tits to buntings.

Commentary by Dave Gosney; illustrations by Alan Harris; birdsound recordings by Jean Roché.

7 hours. Red, Green & Blue Co., London, 1994. £15.95 each; or £59.95 per set.

These videos cover 250 species of British birds, including some occasional visitors such as Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* and Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*. Each video has its own printed index card, listing the species and tape-running information, so it is easy to find each bird quickly.

Instructions at the start of each tape helpfully explain conventions (e.g. yellow on a map indicates summer visitors). Each species has a size measurement and label showing whether it is male, female, juvenile, etc., but this is in white lettering often against a pale

background, making it very difficult to see.

Some species are shown as stills rather than as moving images, which can be forgiven in some cases, when the latter are difficult to obtain, but surely not for birds such as Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*?

I recommend these videos to most general birdwatchers, to supplement the static illustrations in a field guide. They capture the jizz and character of many species: ideal for brushing up on your identification skills.

Simon Patient

Gosney in Israel: a spectacular birdwatching adventure in the Holy Land.

By Dave Gosney.

Red, Green & Blue Co., London, 1995. Video; approx. 48 minutes. £19.95.

For the birdwatcher, Israel is an ideal destination. A vast array of species, often relatively easy to observe, includes a mouth-watering selection of 'special birds'. From the very first, a Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* at Eilat, to the closing views of wintering raptors and Common Cranes *Grus grus* in the Hula Valley, we are treated to a host of delights: not only wheatears and larks, four species of sandgrouse and three of kingfisher, raptors, and huge flocks of waterbirds, but many other local specialities—and the close-ups are a birder's dream. Brief 'guest appearances' from John Morgan (birds in the hand at Eilat Ringing Station), Paul Doherty (on his tenth annual visit) and, of course, the inimitable Hadoram Shirihi (with some informed words on conservation) add to the instructive and

occasionally humorous commentary.

The scenery and the birds are magnificent. The photographer has even managed to capture Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* at dusk at the famous Eilat pumping-station—where in 1994, in failing light, I narrowly escaped the fangs of an African Horned Viper *Cerastes cerastes*.

If you think that you know Israel, you may get a few surprises when you watch this video at home. If you have yet to visit, it will surely spur you to book your first trip.

Amazingly, this film was shot entirely in November. I urge Dave Gosney to show us Israel's spectacular birdlife in spring, and in early autumn, too.

David A. Christie



BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR

Canon After several viewings and much discussion, this year's entry of around 140 slides was whittled down to the top 20. Even closer examination was followed, as usual, by the four judges making individual, confidential votes, each placing the final 20 photographs in sequence. The result was as follows:

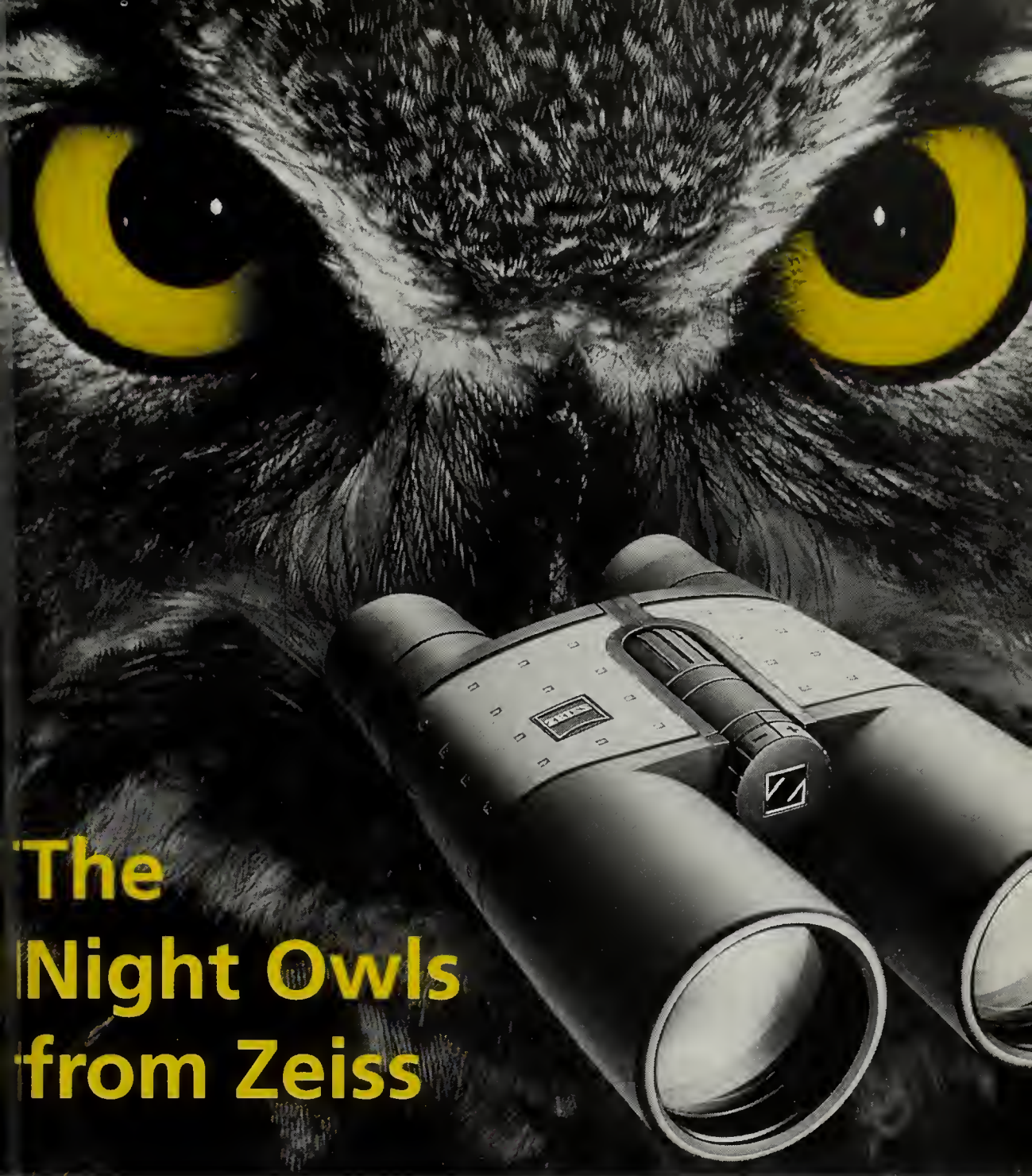
- 1st European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, Mike Lane, West Midlands
- 2nd Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Jens Eriksen, Sultanate of Oman
- 3rd Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Mike Wilkes, Worcestershire
- 4th Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*, Jens Eriksen
- 5th= Common Coots *Fulica atra*, Neil Bowman, Norfolk
- 5th= Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria*, Hanne Eriksen, Sultanate of Oman
- 7th Merlin *Falco columbarius*, David Callan, Strathclyde
- 8th Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, Steve Young, Merseyside
- 9th Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Gordon Langsbury, Berkshire
- 10th Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*, Tim Loseby, Kent
- 11th= Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber*, B. Wright, South Humberside
- 11th= Grey Partridges, Mike Wilkes
- 13th= Little Auk *Alle alle*, C. M. Greaves, Yorkshire
- 13th= Little Crake *Porzana parva*, Richard Brooks, Essex
- 15th= Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, D. Robinson, Northumberland
- 15th= Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Wayne Richardson, Cleveland
- 15th= Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos*, Gary Smith, Norfolk
- 18th Common Teal *A. crecca*, R. Glover, Essex
- 19th White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Richard Brooks
- 20th Mallards, Ernie Janes, Hertfordshire

European Bee-eaters always have the potential to make pleasing photographs. With this year's winner (plate 88), Mike Lane has surpassed this standard to achieve a truly beautiful photograph. In Spain last year, Mike spent three afternoons waiting for the bird to land on this particular delicate branch of the flowering tree. It was worth the wait. The whole picture is well defined and the bird in a perfect pose. The green of the leaves and yellow of the flower complement the feather colours of the bird, creating a perfect portrait. Even if the bird was not in the picture, the photograph would stand up on its own right; the Bee-eater enhances the picture. Surely this is a good test for assessing stunning bird photographs?

Second place went to Jens Eriksen's evocative picture of a Lesser Kestrel in Oman (plate 90). This individual was one of an impressive flock of 150. The photographer used his car as a hide and camera rest, although by all accounts the birds were not timid. We could not recall seeing such a fine photograph of any kestrel species hovering, let alone of the delicate Lesser Kestrel.

The third prize goes to Mike Wilkes for his stunning photograph of a Grey Partridge taken in Warwickshire (plate 91). The bird seems almost to jump out of the photograph, demanding attention. As well as being in perfect focus, the action shown by this singing bird adds additional interest.

Plate 88. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1995. European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, Spain, May 1994 (Canon EOS 5; Canon 600 mm F4 autofocus; 1/125th, f.8; Kodachrome 64)(Mike Lane)



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Plate 89. FOURTH: Immature Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*, Oman, November 1994 (Nikon F4s; Nikkor 300 mm + 1.4 converter; 1/350th, f.5.6; Fujichrome 100D) (Jens Eriksen)

Plate 90. SECOND PRIZE: Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Oman, April 1994 (Nikon F4s; Nikkor 600 mm + 1.4 converter; 1/500th, f.5.6; Fujichrome 100D) (Jens Eriksen)





Plate 91. THIRD PRIZE: Male Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* singing, Warwickshire, February 1994 (Canon EOS 100; Canon 300 mm F4L; 1/350th, f.5.6; Kodachrome 64)(Mike Wilkes)



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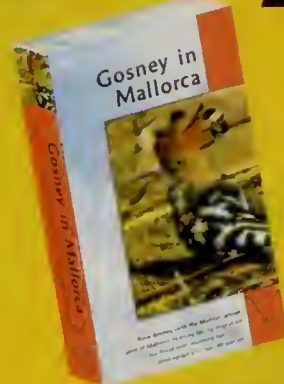
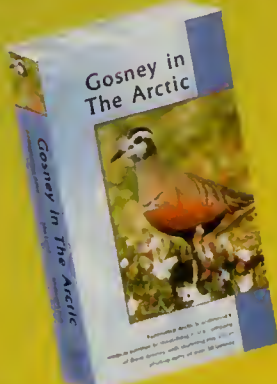
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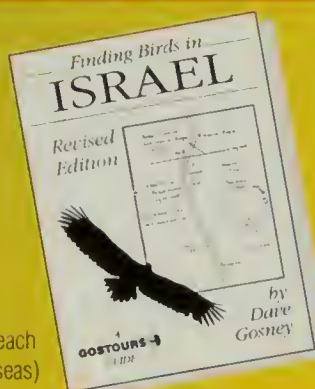
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BIRDCGUIDES



Another photograph by Jens Eriksen, again taken in Oman, achieved fourth place. Jens observed that the underside of the passing raptor was illuminated by sunlight reflected by the rocks as it flew on its regular 'beat' and he positioned himself cleverly to take advantage of this. As a result, his beautifully exposed shot of the Imperial Eagle (plate 89) shows incredible feather detail on an impressive bird.

The selection of shots taken by Jens in Oman is enhanced by the extremely good light conditions in that part of the World. The only situations in which you would get such sunlight reflection in this country would be over snow or sand. Photographs taken outside the Western Palearctic are acceptable for entry in this competition if they depict Western Palearctic species, but they may be marked down slightly, during the judging process, in comparison with equally good entries achieved within the region.

One of two entries jointly ranked fifth is that of Common Coots on a small private broad in Norfolk (plate 92), artistically photographed and beautifully composed by Neil Bowman. His use of 200-ASA film resulted in the slightly larger grain size of the emulsion, adding to the 'misty' look. The other fifth place was achieved by Hanne Eriksen with her shot of a Sociable Lapwing taken in Oman (plate 93). Superb definition and the use of portrait format enhances this photograph, which is ideally composed and a perfect example of its kind.

The 'Windrush Award' for the best set of photographs from a photographer aged 21 or under was won by Tristan Millen for his selection of well-defined shots taken in Kent.

Sponsorship of the competition by *Canon* is particularly appropriate, since *Canon* photographic equipment is highly regarded by wildlife photographers. Indeed, it was used by both the first and the third prize-winners this year.

The July issue of the magazine *Bird Watching* is featuring a further six of the short-listed photographs, in addition to Mike Lane's winning photograph of the European Bee-eater. Thus, 12 of the top 20 photographs are being reproduced in colour in either *British Birds* or *Bird Watching*.

The three prize-winners and 14 runners-up and ten other short-listed photographers will all be invited to attend the award presentations, which will take place during the Press Reception on the day preceding the public opening of the Society of Wildlife Artists' exhibition at The Mall Galleries. The three winning entries will be on display at The Mall Galleries during 27th July to 11th August and at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water during 18th-20th August.

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FACING PAGE

Plate 92. FIFTH: Common Coots *Fulica atra*, Norfolk, December 1994 (Canon EOS 600; Canon 500 mm 4.5; Kodachrome 200)(*Neil Bowman*)

Plate 93. FIFTH: Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria*, Oman, November 1994 (Nikon F90; Nikkor 600 mm; 1/250th, f.8; Fujichrome 50 Velvia)(*Hanne Eriksen*)



LETTERS

Shooting and wildlife

A few years ago, I expressed my personal views on hunting and shooting for sport and its effect on wildlife (*Brit. Birds* 79: 248-249). In brief, I was morally opposed, but pragmatically in favour because of the consequential environmental benefits to wildlife: the countryside in my own county of Bedfordshire would look very different if pheasant-shooting was not a major influence on the maintenance of woodland.

At the recent BOU/JNCC conference on 'Feral and introduced birds', a talk by Dr P. A. Robertson included reference to recent survey results (Short 1994) which I believe deserve a wide audience, since the facts could influence many people's attitudes, to pheasant-shooting in particular.

Table 1. Comparison of landowners' actions on farms where Common Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus* are reared and released and those where they are not.

Data summarised from Short (1994).

Habitat factors	COMMON PHEASANTS REARED AND RELEASED		Increase in habitat factor if pheasants are reared
	No	Yes	
Woodland present	22%	78%	x3½
Ride management performed	11%	89%	x8
Coppicing carried out	10%	90%	x9
New woodland created	21%	61%	x3
Shrubs planted	18%	82%	x4½
Conservation headlands left	8%	29%	x3½
Hedges created	34%	53%	x1½
Ponds created	37%	62%	x1½
Marshland created	4%	11%	x3

It would be nice to feel that all farmers would maintain or create good wildlife habitat and attractive landscape features for their value to the community, but in practice this is an unrealistic hope. Game-preservation, however, is a strong motive, as shown by table 1, which summarises just a few of the multitude of facts in the Royal Agricultural College's research report to the Countryside Commission, which covers a sample of over 700 holdings (55% shot over, 45% not), totalling over 19,000 ha. In the sample area, 141,430 gamebirds of six species were shot in a season, of which 83% were Common Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus* and 7% Red-legged Partridges *Alectoris rufa*. The report calculates that pheasant-shooting occurs in perhaps 80% of all woodland in Britain. The decline in actual game-preservation is shown, however, by the fall in the number of gamekeepers, from 23,056 in 1911 to 4,391 by 1951 and 1,790 by the early 1990s (Tapper 1992). Table 1, however, reveals the great value to the rural landscape and its wildlife resulting incidentally from actions carried out primarily for the benefit of gamebirds. This is summarised by Short (1994): 'In conclusion, shooting seems, on the whole, to be highly beneficial for landscape and nature conservation.'

J. T. R. Sharrock

Fountains, Park Lane, Bluntham, Bedford MK44 3N7

References

- SHORT, C. 1994. *Implications of Game Management for Woodland Management, Landscape Conservation and Public Recreation*. Research Report of the Centre for Rural Studies, Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, commissioned by the Countryside Commission.
- TAPPER, S. 1992. *Game Heritage*. Fordingbridge.

Critical approach to mud-slinging

It is unclear on what basis Tim Vaughan makes his 'critical approach to skua identification' (*Brit. Birds* 87: 289-298; 88: 155-156). Although he does not appear to sit on either of our national rarities committees (where the Chairman of the senior one has said that he is unhappy about the situation), he apparently feels entitled to announce that after more than a decade of study they have still decided to 'pend' (sic) claims to have seen McCormick's [South Polar] Skua *Catharacta* [*Stercorarius*] *maccormicki* because they do not know what it looks like. If anyone else is still in doubt about this, a bird accepted by the local, national and international authorities of the day as most probably coming from Yarmouth in October 1868 (though doubtless it will be argued that it might have come from the South Atlantic) has now been located in the Norwich Museum (*Sea Swallow* 43: 74-76).

Since Mr Vaughan then falls back on the old legal maxim 'if you have a poor case, abuse the plaintiff's attorney', and tries to include a dispute about gulls in the argument in the same way that skuas were previously dragged into the full controversy, may we also point out that there have in fact now been no fewer than three such displays of bad manners, involving first the identification of Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* (*Brit. Birds* 61: 138-143; 63: 91-93), then unseasonable Sabine's Gulls *L. sabini* (*Brit. Birds* 80: 332-333), and finally a report of the occurrence of Brown-headed Gulls *L. brunnicephalus* around Arabia just as W. (Ted) Hoogendoorn, who had not been there, pronounced that they do not occur there (*Dutch Birding* 13: 102-103; 15: 173-175), to the first two of which you were kind enough to allow a reply, though the Dutch have refused to permit even a deliberately moderate response?

It may be useful to explain our credentials and attitude more fully. The Royal Naval Bird-watching Society, which is half a century old next year, is the only organisation in the World which collects records of seabirds on a global scale. Observers are asked to record the distribution and numbers of birds at sea, reporting the distinctive features of unusual records (we have no time or space for full descriptions of thousands of records, and see no reason to change our procedure to conform to the prejudices of people with a mistaken belief in the local rarity of the most widespread bird in the World). The file of observations is now something over three metres long, and provided the basis for the worldwide distribution maps which formed the unrecognised original contribution (widely copied elsewhere) in their late Chairman Captain Gerald Tuck's *Field Guide to the Seabirds* . . . (1978), which still appear to be the only ones based on direct observation.

Bourne has been scientific adviser, and has sometimes prepared the annual summaries of observations, for over two-thirds of this time, and we have corresponded with each other for about half of it. He was also a member of the

British Ornithologists' Union's Records Committee for a while 25 years ago until he resigned in protest at its methods (which in the case of seabirds have not changed much), and he has now also resigned from the Union's Council in protest at the contravention of this Committee's Standing Orders by the nomination of a member for more than nine years in succession. Curtis is a member of the British Birds Rarities Committee's seabird advisory panel.

We feel that reports of rare seabirds are not receiving a fair deal in Britain (and indeed most countries), possibly because they are often made by people outside the usual 'twitching' circles, using criteria for identification based on experience at sea which, it has become evident, are unfamiliar to rarities committees, and it seemed time for some comment despite the anticipated hostile response. Since we have also been accused of mud-slinging, may we point out that we have made no personal attacks on anyone like those in the gull correspondence cited above, but merely quoted from a comic opera by Gilbert & Sullivan (though anyone who feels the cap fits is welcome to put it on)?

Most twitchers seem pleasant people who perform a useful service by pointing out rarities to each other, and we have no complaint against them so long as they do not frighten the birds. It seems a pity that a minority are spoiling their good name, if any of their attitudes is questioned, by adopting the behaviour of an otherwise attractive small black-and-white animal which (to maintain the high tone of this discussion and avoid further accusations of scurrilous libel) we shall refer to as *Mephitis mephitis*.

W. R. P. Bourne

Department of Zoology, Aberdeen University, Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen AB9 2TN

W. F. Curtis

Farm Cottage, Church Lane, Atwick, Driffield, East Yorkshire YO25 8DM

EDITORIAL COMMENT We should point out that the term twitcher is not a synonym for identification-expert or rarity-assessor.

Both sides of the discussion have now stated their cases, so this correspondence is now closed.

Great Auk appeal

Before I sound too much like an old curmudgeon, let me state that I am wholeheartedly in favour of all types of environmental education and believe that museums and similar institutions, by and large, do an excellent job with the, often paltry, resources allotted to them. I could not, however, help feeling that the appeal, featured in *British Birds* (88: 162), to raise £15,000 towards the purchase of 'one of the best skins of Great Auk in existence', by the Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow, was somewhat sad, and an illustration that, 151 years after the beast's demise, we still have not correctly determined our priorities with regard to its many threatened relatives.

No dead bird is worth such a sum (let alone twice the amount!). May I suggest that, if the Museum cannot persuade the current owner to donate the skin for use in its conservation display, it uses an empty case labelled 'Great Auk, *Pinguinus impennis*: through greed and exploitation, gone from here, gone for ever!', with a

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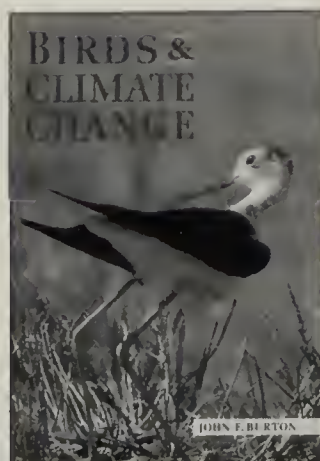
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card inside stating that the £15,000 that was raised for the purchase of the dead bird skin has been donated to the conservation of the Little Blue Macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii*, or one of the other 200 or 300 species which are seriously threatened worldwide?

Keith Bowey

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Lost Great Auks and new breeding gulls

It seems surprising that, in their haste to be first to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the loss of the Great Auk *Pinguinus impennis* in 1844 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 269-270, 496; 88: 114-116; *New Scientist* 28th May 1994), nobody has remarked on the report in Alfred Newton's obituary of the species (*Ibis* 3: 374-399), to which I tried to draw attention at a BOU Symposium two years before (*Archives of Natural History* 20: 257-278), that there used to be many more in Newfoundland, where the first President of the BOU, Col. H. M. Drummond-Hay (who was very well informed about our local seabirds), saw one on the Tail of the Bank, too far out to sea for the suggested alternative of a Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*, in December 1852, and reported that another was said to have been washed up dead the following year.

It also seems odd that, while it is now proposed that we replace this loss artificially, with exotic aliens with big appetites and no manners such as the penguins (*Brit. Birds* 88: 115), so little attention is paid to our more natural gains. Thus, while *British Birds* (88: 106) reports how I once predicted that Mediterranean *Larus melanocephalus* and Little Gulls *L. minutus* might soon breed with us, nobody seems to be looking yet for the next obvious colonist: the Ring-billed Gull *L. delawarensis*, which, judging by the development of a perfectly enormous colony at Toronto, Canada, should do nicely on the outskirts of some of our larger coastal cities (if it is not breeding there already). So, who is going to get in first with a more cheerful new record for the Old World?

W. R. P. Bourne

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Belly-patch pattern of Alpine Swift

With reference to Phil Chantler's letter and the editorial comment by Alan Dean (*Brit. Birds* 88: 52), we have checked 15 specimens of Italian Alpine Swift *Apus melba* in the ornithological collection 'Arrigoni degli Oddi' in the Rome Municipal Museum of Zoology. Of these, three showed a square-cut belly-patch, four a pointed rear border to the belly-patch and eight an intermediate form. We did not note any correlation between the pattern and sex, age, date or site of capture. We think, therefore, that this range of pattern should be referred to as an example of remarkable intraspecific variability.

Fabrizio Bulgarini, Fulvio Fraticelli and Marta Visentin

Stazione Romana Osservazione e Protezione Uccelli, c/o Oasi Naturale WWF "Bosco di Palo", Via Palo Laziale, 2 - 00055 Ladispoli, Roma, Italy



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Moorland birds and the Big Guns

Further to last October's item under this heading (*Brit. Birds* 87: 495), the Ministry of Defence has now submitted the long-anticipated notice of proposed development for the 23,500-ha Otterburn Training Area (OTA), comprising 22% of the Northumberland National Park (NNP). Taking into account the Government's policy on major developments in the UK's national parks, it follows completion of an independent environmental study (including a joint RSPB/NNP moorland bird survey), the results of which, together with advice from the National Park Authority and the Countryside Commission, have caused the original proposals to be modified considerably, and now represent the minimum necessary to meet the Army's operational requirements.

Within the OTA, there is habitat supporting four species listed on Annex 1 (Article 4.1) of the EU Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds: Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus*, European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* and Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*. High densities of breeding waders occur, including Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*, and the OTA is also an important area for Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*, with about 25 'lekking' males recorded, effectively forming a link between populations in south Scotland and its English stronghold in the North Pennines.

The MoD states that the £23m development plan for OTA—part of a nationwide £70m upgrading of infrastructure and facilities at its eight training areas, and incorporating a £1m programme of environmental measures to reduce the effect of military manoeuvres, protect wildlife and the landscape and minimise noise impact—is essential to the Army as part of a nationwide reorganisation of training, resulting from the drawdown of forces from Germany. Not only do these forces include units equipped with the Multi-Launch Rocket System (MLRS) and the new AS90 self-propelled gun, but Otterburn is the only range in the UK where the MLRS can be fired tactically. Under the reorganisation, live firing of AS90 and the MLRS is, therefore, planned to take place at Otterburn, but some other types of training will be relocated to other training areas.

By the turn of the year, 72% of the Army will be UK-based, and a significant proportion of these forces will be equipped with heavy-tracked vehicles, which will inevitably put pressure on training areas, something that the MoD says it will closely monitor.

We now await responses from interested parties.

Consultative strategy for The Wash

First mentioned in this column in July last year (*Brit. Birds* 87: 341), the Consultation Draft

has now been published and is available from the addresses listed previously.

Whose birds are they anyway?

Under this heading, the 29th All-Ireland Conference on bird conservation took place in Newcastle, Co. Down, during 10th-12th March 1995. Once again, the RSPB and the Irish Wildbird Conservancy (IWC) put together a splendid weekend, and we are not saying that just because the first prize of a free weekend in the Burrendale Hotel is now ours (having been narrowly beaten in 1994). The serious stuff ranged from seabirds and the *Braer* incident to international trade in endangered species. But this is a conference at which to renew acquaintances, make new friends, talk over old times and plan new adventures. This was a truly Irish gathering, and as always it was a pleasure and a privilege to attend.

Scandinavia's Upland dip!

Still awaiting ratification by Norway's rarities committee, the Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* at Elverum, Hedmark, in October and November 1994 will be Scandinavia's first. In southern Norway, there is now a rather amused housewife with a very big tick on her garden list. She knows all the common garden birds, so when this stranger appeared (and remained for some three weeks) she carefully photographed it and sent it off to the local newspaper for identification. There was an unfortunate delay in the press publishing the photograph, but, when they did, the twitching fraternity was quick to react, and stare at the now-empty snow-covered lawn! The photograph is reproduced in *Vår Fuglefauna* (17: 246-248).

Little peace for Antarctica's wildlife

With some alarming stories coming out of the 'White Continent', it comes as no surprise to hear that the penguins and other wildlife in Antarctica are finding peace and quiet increasingly hard to come by. The National Geographic Society recently reported that, since 1986, the number of visitors to the frozen continent has made a tenfold leap to 8,000 in 1993. Tourists are no longer content to watch wildlife from afar; they want to get closer. To reduce these problems, the 42

countries that signed the Antarctic Treaty in 1959 have now adopted guidelines for tourists, including a code of conduct distributed to visitors, which directs them to refrain from doing anything that might cause an animal to alter its behaviour (would all tourists recognise this?). Special precautions are taken during breeding seasons. Tour operators will play a crucial part in enforcing the code, since there are no park rangers or police in Antarctica.

Vole trails a dead giveaway

How do Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* and other raptors know where to look to find the most food? Recent experiments by a Finnish research team (*Nature* 373: 425-427) suggest that the prey animals inadvertently advertise their presence.

Field Voles *Microtus agrestis* mark their runways with urine and faeces, and these scent marks are visible to the Kestrels in ultraviolet light (but not in visible light). Thus, hunting Kestrels can not only see where in a field are the most likely places to spot a vole, but can also judge (by the density of runways) which are the best fields over which to hunt. These findings, therefore, also suggest a way in which raptors may be able to home in rapidly on new areas of rodent abundance after the periodic crashes in vole populations, which are synchronous over hundreds of square kilometres.

Extra protection for River Crouch Marshes

The River Crouch Marshes in Essex have been designated a Special Protection Area for Birds (SPA) under the EC Birds Directive and a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. This is the latest phase in the scheme to create a much larger single Mid-Essex Coast SPA, which will also include Dengie and Colne Estuary, both already designated, Foulness and the Blackwater Estuary.

This area of saltmarsh and grazing marsh, covering 900 ha, is justly notable for its wintering waterfowl, including more than 1% of the World population of the dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*, with a strong supporting cast of Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Northern Pintail *A. acuta*, Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* and Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*. In addition, the site holds a number of rare plants and invertebrates.

Shetland Sandeel Fishery reopened

By the time you read this, the Shetland Sandeel Fishery will just have closed at the end of June after its somewhat controversial reopening this year for the first time since June 1990. Generally recognised as being a major factor in the much-publicised breeding failure of Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*, Puffins *Fratercula arctica*, Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus*, Common Guillemots *Uria aalge* and Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea*, the last of whose numbers fell by 75% between 1980 and 1990, the Scottish Office announced at the beginning of April that, following consultation, the fishery would reopen under tight restrictions: an annual quota of 3,000 tonnes (compared with 52,000 tonnes in 1984, spiralling down to just 2,000 tonnes in 1990), landings to be made only at Lerwick, only licensed boats up to a length of 20 m to be eligible to join the fishery, and the fishery to close on 30th June whether or not the quota has been reached.

The decision, according to the Scottish Office, was in line with advice received from international fisheries scientists that stock levels around Shetland were currently standing at a high level. The case for earlier closure of the fishery and closures of sensitive sites will be examined before the commencement of the 1996 fishery season.

The RSPB is particularly dismayed that the closure will be at the end of June rather than the beginning, a month of maximum pressure on sandeel stocks by seabirds. It also seems particularly ironic that, in the same week as Scottish Natural Heritage announced three marine sites in Shetland as potential offshore Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), there should be no restriction on the fishery around one of them, the waters surrounding the island of Mousa.

Rarity descriptions

It is very helpful if all observers of rarities send in their descriptions (preferably to the relevant county or regional recorder) as soon as possible after the sighting. It will speed up the decision-making process if notes on all major spring rarities are submitted by mid July at the latest. *Please do not wait until the end of the year.* Thank you. (Contributed by M. J. Rogers)

Planning a future for Barn Owls

Local-authority planners, wildlife trusts and country agencies throughout Britain have been sent a book entitled *Barn Owls On Site—a guide for developers and planners*, the result of five years of research by the Barn Owl Trust. The aim is to halt the decline of the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* by encouraging planners to stipulate that provision for them be made where there is any sign of occupancy by the birds, such as in a barn to be converted. By incorporating an access hole into the roof space of such a building, the owls could probably happily co-exist with their human neighbours. And, who knows, in the not-too-distant future, having resident Barn Owls in your loft could become a good selling point for estate agents.

The 48-page illustrated book can be purchased for £5.00 (incl. p&p), from The Barn Owl Trust, Waterlcat, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7HU.

Smaller Sand Martins survive

A report in the BTO's journal *Bird Study* reveals that very small changes in body size affect the chances of survival for Sand Martins *Riparia riparia*, probably whilst they are wintering in Africa. The authors, David Bryant and Gareth Jones, measured breeding Sand Martins from a population in central Scotland and found that, following a severe drought in the winter quarters, it was the small individuals that returned in the following summer. The findings have important implications for our understanding of survival by birds and, in particular, the means by which weather conditions more than 4,000 km from the breeding grounds may affect the number and composition of breeding populations in Britain.

Breaking the news gently

Peter Clement's masterly summary (*Brit. Birds* 88: 291-295) of the identification pitfalls and assessment problems associated with the species stated that 'The identification of an adult Woodchat Shrike [*Lanius senator*] should present very few problems.'

Let us, however, never forget the rejection postcard sent to a South Coast lady, concerning her claim of a Woodchat Shrike, by the then-Secretary of the British Birds Rarities Committee in the early 1960s. The postcard bore only four words: 'It was a Chaffinch.'

Those were the days!

SOF celebrates 50 years

We are delighted to offer our congratulations to Sveriges Ornitologiska Förening (the Swedish Ornithologists' Union) on reaching its fiftieth anniversary. Since its inception in 1945, the SOF has become a leading force in Swedish ornithology, and its excellent journal, *Vår Fågelvärld*, is greatly respected in ornithological circles throughout Europe and beyond.

Thanks largely to SOF, Sweden is now a major influence in ornithology, as witnessed by the many contributions by Swedes to *BB* and other leading bird journals.

Ornithologists can help to support SOF by ordering jubilee medallions, commemorative stickers and a special limited-edition lithograph by Dag Peterson. Details can be obtained from the general secretary of SOF, Gustaf Aulén, SOF, Box 14219, 104 40 Stockholm, Sweden.

Any old bins?

The Newton Aycliffe YOC Group has asked us to tell all *BB* readers that any unwanted old binoculars will be put to very good use by some of its 40 members. If you can help, please telephone Mark Rayment on 01642-850202 (daytime) or 01325-460180

New format for 'British Birds'

British Birds will be appearing in a new format shortly, measuring 15 mm wide \times 23 mm deep.

No, we have not made a mistake, it is indeed millimetres, not centimetres. An issue of *BB* is being produced as a dolls'-house accessory, for sale at specialised craft fairs, by Valerie Claire Miniatures; tel.: Matlock (01629) 580759.

Bigger 'Birding'

The American Birding Association's bimonthly journal *Birding* is always one of our favourite reads. Vol. 26 no. 6 (December 1994) and vol. 27 no. 1 (February 1995) arrived almost together. The first includes a 14-page paper on the separation of Magnificent *Fregata magnificens* from Great Frigatebird *F. minor* by Steve N. G. Howell, to which we shall certainly rush the next time we are lucky enough to have such a problem.

With its twenty-seventh volume, *Birding's* format has increased by 18%, to 20.5 \times 27.6

Know any good birders aged 21 or younger?

If you know a birdwatcher aged 21 or less who you think might be good enough to win the title Young Ornithologist of the Year, please encourage him or her to enter the competition. Prizes and titles will be awarded within three age categories: 21 or under, 16 or under and 12 or under.

The prizes for the three winners are worth over £2,500, and all it takes to enter is a good field notebook (see *Brit. Birds* 88: 164 for the rules and details of the prizes).

The closing date for entries is 1st September 1995.

'Barbour' wins again

Congratulations to J. Barbour & Sons Ltd, one of the sponsors of our Young Ornithologists of the Year competition, which has won its third Queen's Award for Export Achievement in five years (1992, 1994 and 1995). The company, which is based in South Shields, celebrated its centenary last year. Rather like *Thermos* and *Biro*, the name of *Barbour* has become almost synonymous with its most famous product, high-quality oiled cotton jackets.

Film titles amended

We enjoyed the competition in the magazine *Birdwatch* (April 1995 issue) which was won by 'Acrocephalus Now', 'The Untoucha-bulbuls' and 'Redpoll without a Cause'. Our personal favourites from among the runners-up were 'From Heron to a Ternery', 'Schindler's Year List' and 'The Sound of Smew Chicks'.

cm. The first issue features Beidaihe and also includes a detailed comparison of the new Zeiss 7 \times 45 'Night Owl' binocular with the spectacle-wearers' old favourite, the Zeiss 7 \times 42, by Pete Dunne.

Like *BB*, the journal *Birding* is published by a non-profit-making company, or, as the ABA puts it, a 'not-for-profit organization'.

The ABA's address is PO Box 6599, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80934, USA. Annual membership costs \$45 (\$36 in USA or Canada).

Morocco with 'BB' in 1995

The scenery in Morocco is strikingly beautiful. Each of the country's diverse habitats holds special bird species. Participants in the *British Birds*/Sunbird tour to Morocco in April 1995 travelled extensively in this fascinating country.

Among many species, they watched Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* feeding in dry clifftop scrub, Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* at the teeming Oued Sous estuary, Marsh Owl *Asio capensis* at a coastal reedbed, Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* at rest in a sandy area surrounded by stone desert, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* hawking over fertile agricultural land on the fringe of the Sahara, Thick-billed Lark *Ramphocoris clotbey* in a very productive area of flat stone desert, Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri* in the cedar woods of the Middle

Atlas, Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola* in the juniper forests of the Middle Atlas, Fulvous Babbler *Turdoides fulvus* in the palms of a desert wadi, Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegala* at the great Oued Massa reserve, Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex* at a dramatic sand-dune site, and Crimson-winged Finch *Rhodopechys sanguinea* near the summit of the snow-capped High Atlas. There were also surprises, including a male Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* at an oasis and a first-summer Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* on a sandy beach. (Contributed by Peter Lansdown)

[Morocco will be the destination of one of the seven 'BB'/Sunbird tours planned for 1996 (see page 349), and *British Birds* subscribers will again be eligible for a 10% discount.]

Counting the mammals

If you ever thought that counting huge swirling flocks of waders was bad enough, spare a thought for the four mammalogists commissioned by JNCC to count all our British mammals, other than cetaceans. The results of the first national census, which, not surprisingly, claim to be something of an educated guess, have recently been published in book form by JNCC, entitled *A Review of British Mammals: population estimates and conservation status of British mammals other than cetaceans* by S. Harris, P. Morris, S. Wray and D. Yalden (ISBN 1873701683).

The league table, published also in the April issue of *BBC Wildlife*, along with an accompanying article on how the results were arrived at, ranges from the sad demise to extinction of

the Greater Mouse-eared Bat *Myotis myotis* to the estimate of 75,000,000 Field Voles *Microtus agrestis*. In between are figures, all assumed before onset of the breeding season, for another 63 species of mammal in order of ascendancy, telling which are native, which introduced, and an idea of stability or otherwise of the population. Those species currently causing greatest concern are Brown Hare *Lepus capensis*, Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* and Water Vole *Arvicola terrestris*.

The review will form a basis from which to evaluate future changes. Now follows the setting-up of a mammal-monitoring scheme to provide data similar to those obtained from bird surveys.

Genetically matching butterflies

English Nature is working on a project that could see the Large Copper *Lycaena dispar* gracing the Norfolk Broads for the first time in over a century. By matching DNA samples extracted from Large Copper museum exhibits in Reading Museum with DNA found in Continental examples, the long-term aim is to return this butterfly to specifically managed areas in the Norfolk Broads in a project supported by the Broads Authority. There is thought to be a good chance that a Continental colony can be traced which is a close enough match with museum exhibits of the extinct English form.

Bare affrontery

Maybe we in Britain are rightly considered prudish, but we were surprised to see the depths to which a certain Scandinavian magazine had sunk in order to promote its country's newly published breeding-bird atlas. A photograph of a certain well-known, ample, foreign figure posing topless beside a copy of the book has been used by the journal *Vår Fuglefauna* (71: 223) to draw attention to the Norwegian atlas (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 88: 158-159). Readers may rest assured that there are no plans for such obscene pictures to disgrace *BB*'s seemly pages (even if the well-known figure is that of our own Managing Editor).

BPY photographs

The top six photographs in this year's Bird Photograph of the Year competition are shown on pages 327-330. A further six are published in this month's issue of *Bird Watching* magazine: David Callan's Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Gordon Langsbury's Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Mike Wilkes's Grey Partridges *Perdix perdix*, C. M. Greaves's Little Auk *Alle alle*, Richard Brooks's Little Crake *Porzana parva* and Ernie Janes's Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos*, as well as Mike Lane's winning European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (plate 88). We greatly welcome this now-annual co-operation with *Bird Watching*.

The July issue costs £2.25 over the counter of your local bookstall, or, if you cannot find it at the newsagent, contact BBC Frontline, Park House, 117 Park Road, Peterborough PE1 2TR.

Joan Hall-Craggs honoured

The Zoological Society of London's Stamford Raffles Award, won in the past two years by Dr Denis Summers-Smith and Dr W. R. P. Bourne (*Brit. Birds* 87: 445; 87: 300), has been awarded this year to Mrs Joan Hall-Craggs in recognition of her contributions to the study of bird song.

New Recorders

T. Pepper, Scobells Farm, Boast Lane, Barcombe, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 5DY, has taken over from Owen Mitchell as Recorder for East & West Sussex.

Robert M. Fray, 5 New Park Road, Leicester LE2 8AW, has taken over from Andrew MacKay as Recorder for Leicestershire.

Kevin Osborn, 20 Nederdale, Lerwick, Shetland ZE1 0SA, has taken over from Dave Suddaby as recorder for Shetland (except Fair Isle).

Colin Crooke, RSPB, Etive House, Beechwood Park, Inverness IV2 3BB, is now Recorder for the whole of Highland except Caithness.

Election of Irish 'rare man'

The Irish Rare Birds Committee is inviting all observers who have had records published in either of the two most recent issues of eight national or regional bird reports to apply for a voting paper to elect a member to take up the vacant fifth place on the IRBC. Candidates will be nominated by the IRBC itself, but this democratic election will surely be widely welcomed among birdwatchers in Ireland.

Norfolk news

The Norfolk Bird Club goes from strength to strength, judging by its *Bulletin*. It provides a balanced blend of attention to the status of commoner birds as well as occurrences of rarities, serious subjects and lighter items such as competitions (e.g. 'Which will be the next addition to the Norfolk list?'). The latest copy to hand (no. 14) includes a report of 'Probable White-rumped Swift [*Apus caffer*] in Norfolk', watched on the afternoon of 9th November 1994, but never giving views close enough for identification of a species new to Britain & Ireland to be clinched. What a sound decision, however, to publish details in the *Bulletin* rather than to ignore it.

Vernon Eve and Michael E. S. Rooney are the editors, it costs £8.50 to join the NBC: write to The Old Bakery, High Street, Docking, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE31 8NH.

New Norfolk recording arrangements

The task of producing the Norfolk Bird Report systematic list is now the responsibility of the Norfolk Bird Club, and all observations should be forwarded (preferably on a monthly basis) to the new county recorder, Michael E. S. Rooney, Norfolk Bird Club, The Old Bakery, High Street, Docking, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE31 8NH. The county Report will continue to be published by the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists Society, and Michael J. Seago continues as Editor.

New RBBP member

Following the necessary endorsements by the Council of the RSPB, the Council of the BTO and the Editorial Board of *British Birds*, Dr Humphrey Q. P. Crick has now joined the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, replacing Dr Jeremy Greenwood who recently retired from the Panel.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—Northern Ireland

Tim Cleeves—Northeast

David Clugston—Scotland

Dave Flumm—Southwest

Barrie Harding—East Anglia

Oran O'Sullivan—Republic of Ireland

Alan Richards—Midlands

Don Taylor—Southeast

Dr Stephanie Tyler—Wales

John Wilson—Northwest



Swinhoe's Storm-petrels at Tynemouth: new to Britain and Ireland

Mark G. Cubitt

The possibility of catching a vagrant species during a ringing session at a site on the Northumberland coast is never far from the back of one's mind during October, particularly when there is an easterly wind blowing. The concept that anything remotely similar could happen when tape-luring small numbers of European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* would have been considered, at best, fanciful prior to 23rd July 1989.

Since that date, there has been an incredible series of captures of what we now know to be Swinhoe's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma monorhis*. Three individuals have been involved. The first two were on 23rd and 26th July 1989. The third has, quite amazingly, been caught eight times in five consecutive years: on 6th July 1990, 30th July 1991, 29th July 1992, 21st, 28th and 29th July 1993, and 11th, 23rd and 25th July 1994.

Members of our small team take it in turns to watch the nets on the rocky beach at the base of Tynemouth's north pier. Mary Carruthers had noted, with some excitement, a larger bird, stiffer-winged than the familiar European Storm-petrels, circling the nets briefly on 18th July 1989. I immediately switched the tape to that of the presumed Leach's Storm-petrel *O. leucorhoa*, but the bird was not seen again, at least not that night.

On our next outing, on 23rd July, Adam Hutt and I also saw a larger petrel, but this time it circled the nets once and was then caught. Having rushed over to the net, I was astounded to find that the bird did not have any white on its rump and, even in the darkness of the beach, that its outer wing feathers had white shafts.

At our ringing base, in discussion with Les Hall and Keith Regan, it was clear that the bird was of the genus *Oceanodroma*. We recalled that a Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *O. matsudairae* had been claimed on a pelagic trip in the Southwest

Approaches, but we had no documented measurements with which to compare those taken from our bird.

All of our captures were of birds attracted to the call of European Storm-petrel rather than that of Leach's. Photographs were taken of all of them (see plates 94-96 on page 345). They were quite vocal, both prior to being caught and in the hand; we recorded the call (see fig. 1 on page 346). A blood sample was taken from the one captured in 1991.

Description

The following notes summarise the appearance of all three individuals:

General appearance	coverts blackish-brown, as remiges.
Sooty-brown <i>Oceanodroma</i> storm-petrels.	Underparts
Upperparts	Uniformly sooty-brown, tinged grey.
Head and, to a lesser extent, nape, back, rump and upperside of tail distinctly smoky-grey. Small apparently darker area in front of each eye. Bases of outer six primaries with white shafts. Pale wing-bar from scapulars and inner greater coverts through outer median coverts, formed by pale-fringed feathers, to pale brown carpal covert. Alula and primary	Underwing-coverts rusty-brown. Axillaries faintly barred buff.
	Bare parts
	Bill, legs and feet black. Eye dark.
	Measurements
	The measurements taken for each of the birds caught are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Measurements (in mm) of the three Swinhoe's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma monorhis* caught at Tynemouth in 1989, 1989 and 1990-94, respectively.

Feature	Bird 1	Bird 2	Bird 3
Wing length	167	166	164
Outer tail length	79	83	78
Inner tail length	61	66	63
Bill length	14.9	14.5	14.5
Bill depth	6.4	—	6.4
Tarsus length	—	—	24.4

The identification

It took over three years to identify these birds positively as Swinhoe's Storm-petrels (Bretagnolle *et al.* 1991; Cubitt *et al.* 1992; Dawson 1992). We split the research into three main areas. The first area was plumage and measurements, upon which we based our first published note shortly after the first capture (Carruthers *et al.* 1989). This stated that they 'were either Swinhoe's Storm-petrels or a close relative'. It was the latter possibility that forced us into looking into vocalisations and DNA sequencing, which have been the other main areas of research.

Our birds are very similar in size and structure to the large races of Leach's Storm-petrel, such as the British population. There are some minor size differences, such as tarsus length being greater and bill length and tail length being shorter in proportion to the size of the bird.

The two most significant differences are the all-dark rump and the white on the outer six primary-feather shafts. Some races of Leach's do have dark rumps, but these races are much smaller than Swinhoe's. Individuals of the British population can have significant variation in rump coloration, but always exhibit some white. The presence of white primary shafts showing beyond the coverts is

restricted within this family to Swinhoe's and Matsudaira's Storm-petrels. The latter is significantly larger, as are the other Pacific dark-rumped storm-petrels.

Our birds' biometrics gave good support to the identification as Swinhoe's, but my measurements of wing length appeared to be at or beyond the extreme of those documented for Swinhoe's, thus causing some concern initially. This, though, appears to be due to differences among recorders in experience and technique of measuring maximum-chord wing lengths.

The second area of research, which took the longest time, was the analysis of cytochrome-b mitochondrial DNA sequences. Through this, we discovered that species within the family, such as Leach's and Swinhoe's, are quite distinct. The analyses also showed that our birds had identical sequences in that part of the gene to those of Swinhoe's from Korea and Russia (Dawson 1992).

It is likely that vocalisations provide an important mechanism for storm-petrels to identify the species and sex of another individual in the darkness of a colony. This was the third area of research. We were fortunate that workers in Japan had recently been looking at the vocalisations of both Swinhoe's and Leach's Storm-petrels. This gave us access to recordings that were previously unavailable in the West. More importantly, they had shown significant differences between the calls of the two species and even between sexes. This enabled them to match a recording that we had made (fig. 1 on page 346) to a sonagram of a female Korean Swinhoe's Storm-petrel.

Origins

Swinhoe's Storm-petrels are known to breed on islands mainly off Korea and Japan, but also west to China and north to Russia. They migrate westwards, with the monsoons, into the western Pacific. Some move into the northern Indian Ocean and even into the Red Sea, where the first Western Palearctic record occurred in 1958. This was, perhaps, the route taken by the individual caught on Islote de Benidorm, Spain, in July 1994 (King & Minguez 1994).

In order to account for the captures of seven Swinhoe's Storm-petrels in the North Atlantic since 1983, it has been suggested that there may be a small breeding population in the North Atlantic. Our returning bird, however, now certainly of breeding age — but apparently still wandering — may make this theory less likely. Vagrancy is perhaps the more probable source of these birds, although the lack of records in the Western Indian Ocean makes this far from certain.

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ZEISS

The inclusion of plates 94-96 in colour has been subsidised by *Carl Zeiss Ltd*, sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee.



Plates 94-96. Female Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*, Tynemouth: above and right, July 1993 (Mark Cubitt); below, July 1994 (D. Jackson)



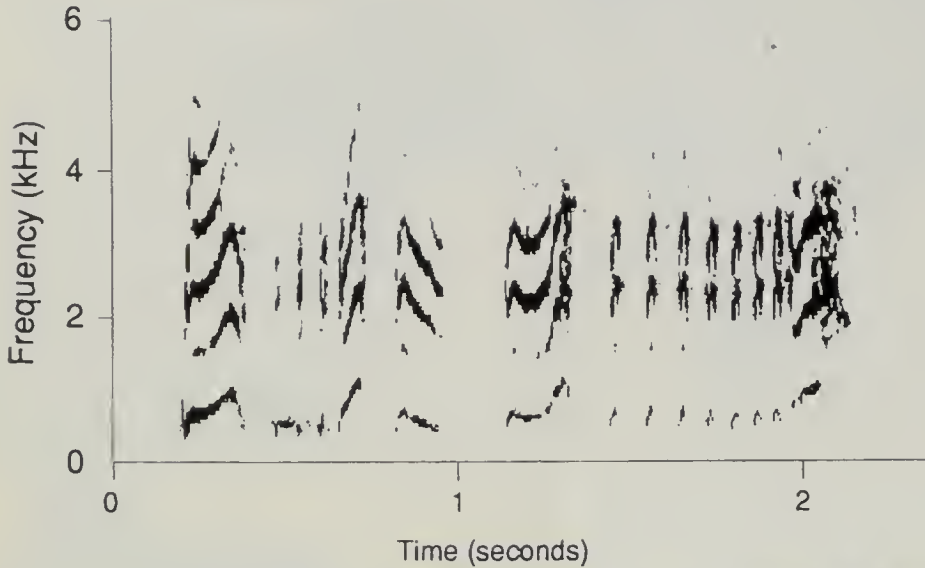


Fig. 1. Sonagram of female Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* captured at Tynemouth in July 1993.

EDITORIAL COMMENT Dr David Parkin, Chairman of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, has commented as follows:

'This must be one of the more astonishing developments in Western Palearctic ornithology of recent decades. At several widely separate locations in the northeast Atlantic, and more or less simultaneously, a species was found that appeared to be new to the region. Not only that, but a series of records came from one site in Northumberland, on the shores of what may be the most intensively watched marine habitat in the world. Not a hint of a record in the British literature down the years, and then two in one week, three in 12 months, and a series of recaptures of one bird in successive years!

'The combination of morphology, sonagram analysis and DNA sequencing were sufficient to exclude other species, including the dark-rumped races of Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, and establish the identity as Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *O. monorhis*. The species was added to category A of the British & Irish List (*Ibis* 136: 253).

'Swinhoe's Storm-petrel breeds in the northwest Pacific Ocean and migrates southwest to winter in the Indian Ocean. What proportion of the population moves into the Indian Ocean is not known. Neither is the route that they take. Even their distribution in the Indian Ocean is obscure. Whether birds dispersed into the Atlantic via the Red Sea or around the tip of southern Africa will probably never be known. There are records from Eilat at the head of the Red Sea and in Mediterranean Spain which might suggest the former, although the widespread occurrences in the Atlantic—Madeira, Brittany and Tyneside—suggest a movement that involved significant numbers, and is perhaps more likely to have been around the Cape. This may have been associated with oceanographic disturbances in the Indian Ocean akin to the El Niño events off western South America. The early 1980s saw a period of enhanced variability, and an intrusion of warm water from the Indian Ocean around the Cape was documented (*S. Afr. J. Mar. Sci.* 12: 271-296).

'The exciting possibility of breeding in the Western Palearctic remains

unresolved. Individuals have been trapped with large vascularised brood-patches, but (to my knowledge) no nest has yet been found. Whatever happens in the future, Mark Cubitt is to be complimented for his enthusiastic detective work in establishing the identity of the species, through tireless correspondence with experts on this little-known group from around the World.'

Rob Hume, Chairman of the British Birds Rarities Committee, has commented: 'This submission was one of the best-presented and most complete ever received by the BBRC. The identification as Swinhoe's Storm-petrel was readily accepted and our job was made easy by the thorough work carried out by the observers concerned, and particularly by the detailed research presented so ably by Mark Cubitt.

'There are several small, dark-rumped storm-petrels to be ruled out of the identification process should a possible Swinhoe's be seen at sea (see particularly Harrison's *Seabirds: an identification guide*, 1983, and *Seabirds of the World: a photographic guide*, 1987).

'Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma matsudairae*, already claimed from southwest Britain, is from the western Pacific, breeding south of Japan and migrating westwards to the Indian Ocean and the east coast of Africa. It is some 24 cm long compared with the 20 cm of Swinhoe's (wing 180-189 mm for male Matsudaira's and 178-194 for females, tail 95-105 mm, depth of fork 28.5-34 mm). It is the only confusion species which shares with Swinhoe's a white forewing patch: it has white bases to the shafts of the outermost six or seven primaries, decreasing in size inwards from the most striking outer three but more obvious than on Swinhoe's (visible from 75 m with 7×50 binoculars, *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*, vol. 1, 1990, whereas on Swinhoe's it is not usually visible at sea). It looks broader-winged and longer-tailed with a deeper tail fork than Swinhoe's, although that is not always obvious in flight, when the tail may be held closed. It has a slower, more direct flight than Swinhoe's, described as lethargic, with occasional twists and bursts of speed, sometimes giving three or four flaps between bounding glides, sometimes using longer bouts of flapping; it feeds by dipping and settling on the water with raised wings (HANZAB).

'Markham's Storm-petrel *O. markhami* occurs off the west coast of South America from Chile to Mexico. It is large (23 cm long, wing 170-180 mm, tail 87-103 mm), has a strikingly deep tail fork and has a markedly long and pale bar across the upperwing-coverts from the carpal joint to the trailing edge of the wing adjacent to the tertial tips, providing contrast with the otherwise dark brown plumage.

'Tristram's Storm-petrel *O. tristrami* is of similar size to Markham's (wing 171-188 mm, tail 97-106 mm). It is from the western Pacific and looks sooty-brown with an obvious pale covert bar, more clearly marked than on Swinhoe's; it also has a greyish colour on the upperparts in fresh plumage, giving a slight darker-hooded effect.

'The Ashy Storm-petrel *O. homochroa*, found off the coasts of California and Mexico, is more the length of Swinhoe's, at 20 cm, but this is due mainly to its relatively longer tail; its wings are noticeably shorter (wing 136-141 mm, tail 72-80 mm). It is sooty-brown with a pale upperwing-bar and markedly forked tail. It has a paler area in a diffuse line across the underwing-coverts

which the others lack and which is visible in close views at sea.

'Black Storm-petrel *O. melania* is also found off California and Central America; at 23 cm long it is relatively large and long-winged (wing 170-182 mm, tail 80-91 mm), and also has a forked tail and a pale covert bar. It looks blacker than Markham's and its covert bar is less extensive, typically fading out towards the outer end and failing to reach the carpal angle. It looks very like a Swinhoe's.

'Least Storm-petrel *O. microsoma* is another Californian species, only 14 cm long, so considerably smaller than the others mentioned here, and with a rounded, not forked, tail.

'There remains the problem of a dark-rumped form of Leach's Petrel *O. leucorhoa*, usually considered a problem in the Pacific, but, since any one of the options must be a very long way out of its normal range, even this apparently unlikely possibility must be considered. Leach's of the nominate race has a wing length of 152-160 mm and tail 76-87 mm, whereas the dark-rumped form *chapmani* is smaller, with wings 148-152 mm and tail 75-82 mm, making it shorter-winged (but not necessarily shorter-tailed) than the Tyneside individuals.

'Rich Stallcup in *Ocean Birds of the Nearshore Pacific* (1990) described the field characters of the several Californian species with an excellent series of photographs. Black Storm-petrel is large and black (whereas Ashy looks brown), with a deliberate flight recalling Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* owing to its rather deep and regular wingbeats. Ashy does not raise its wings so high above the horizontal, while black-rumped Leach's retains the typically erratic flight of the species, quite unlike Black. Ashy is brown with its unique lighter underwing band, which is generally evident, plus a slight upcurved effect to its tail; it has particularly shallow wingbeats, slower than Least but quicker than Ashy and without the marked high upbeat of those species. Least is small and blackish with a short, wedge-shaped or rounded tail, giving a bat-like effect, and fast, deep wingbeats.

'Leach's, of course, has a typically erratic flight, with sudden changes in height and direction and a tendency to switch between leaps and bounds and flat shears. Swinhoe's is relatively little known in the field, but is said to resemble Leach's in its flight action: a dark-rumped Leach's remains, therefore, potentially the most difficult alternative to eliminate should a possible Swinhoe's fly by a fortunate observer during a seawatch.'

We are grateful to Peter Hayman for supplying drawings based on precisely measured specimens (fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, two Swinhoe's Storm-petrels *O. monorhis* and European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*. All drawn to same scale, from dead birds (Peter Hayman)



ANNOUNCEMENT

Birding trips with 'BB'

The following trips are planned (dates are provisional):

17th November to 1st December 1995 THE GAMBIA with Séan McMinn: an introduction to African birds, with the opportunity to see over 300 species, including such specialities as Egyptian Courser *Phasianus aegyptius*.

4th-21st February 1996 THAILAND with Phil Round, Jon Dunn & Tim Sharrock, in search of Siberian winterers and local specialities such as Giant Nuthatch *Sitta magna*, with extension to 27th February looking for Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi*, Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer* and Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*.

6th-21st April MOROCCO with Bryan Bland and Keith Vinicombe, looking for Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*, Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius*, Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex*, seven species of wheatear *Oenanthe* and 14 species of lark (Alaudidae).

16th-26th May POLAND with Ludwik Tomialojć and Steve Rooke, visiting the Białowieża forest and seeking breeding Great Snipe *Gallinago media* and Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*.

30th May to 9th June FINLAND with Dick Forsman and Killian Mullarney, aiming to see all five of Finland's special owl species, and other northern specialities such as Siberian Jay *Perisoreus infaustus*.

Late July ICELAND with Paul Holt and Peter Lansdown in search of Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*, Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica* and Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus*.

July ISRAEL/EGYPT PELAGIC with Hadoram Shirihai and David Fisher, by boat to see Red Sea 'pelagic specialities' and Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*.

27th November to 8th December UAE/BAHRAIN with Colin Richardson and Paul Holt to see Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus* and Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*, and to witness Middle East migration in full swing.

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MONTHLY MARATHON



The two leaders are still there: Jon Holt (Buckinghamshire) and Peter Sunesen (Denmark) both identified the Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* (plate 229), which was photographed by Graham P. Catley in the Western Isles in April 1989. It was correctly named by 74% of competitors, wrong answers including Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (19%), Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina* (4%) and Mistle Thrush *T. viscivorus* (3%).

This month's puzzle picture (plate 97 on page 350) features two species, both of which should be identified.

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Plate 97. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 109: either sixteenth stage in seventh 'Marathon' or first stage in eighth 'Marathon'. Identify the two species. Read the rules on page 65 of the January issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th July 1995.



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 15th May to 18th June 1995.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* Female, Kinnegar (Co. Down), 2nd-3rd June (first in Ireland for 12 years).

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Greatham Creek, 11th June; Seals Sands, 12th-13th June (both Cleveland) (presumably same individual).

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* Quoile Pondage (Co. Down), 21st-23rd May.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* Bude (Cornwall), 16th June.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* Burnham Norton (Norfolk), 11th June.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Boddam Voe (Shetland), 11th-13th June; Minsmere (Suffolk), 14th June; Breydon Water (Norfolk), 15th June.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* Porlock Marshes (Somerset), 5th-9th June.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Salthouse/Blakeney (Norfolk), 1st June; first-summer at Belfast Harbour Estate (Co. Down) still present on 18th June.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire), 11th June; Greatham Creek, 12th-18th June.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon uilolica* Flamborough Head (Humberside), 27th May; two, Rye Harbour

Nature Reserve (East Sussex), 28th May.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* Cuckmere Valley (East Sussex), 6th June.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* Malin Head (Co. Donegal), 7th June.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* Holme (Norfolk), 22nd-15th May.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* Auchmithie, near Arbroath (Tayside), 18th-30th May.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* Fair Isle (Shetland), 27th May; Scotsman's Flash (Greater Manchester), 11th-18th June.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* Fair Isle, 5th-13th June.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* Holme, 18th-19th May; Dungeness (Kent), 14th June.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Great Saltee (Co. Wexford), 15th-16th June.

Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* Sumburgh (Shetland), 25th-26th May.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* Tresta (Shetland), 5th June.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* Scalloway (Shetland), 7th June; Brighton (East Sussex), 12th-13th June; Lowestoft (Suffolk), 18th June; Chapel St Leonards (Lincolnshire), 18th June.



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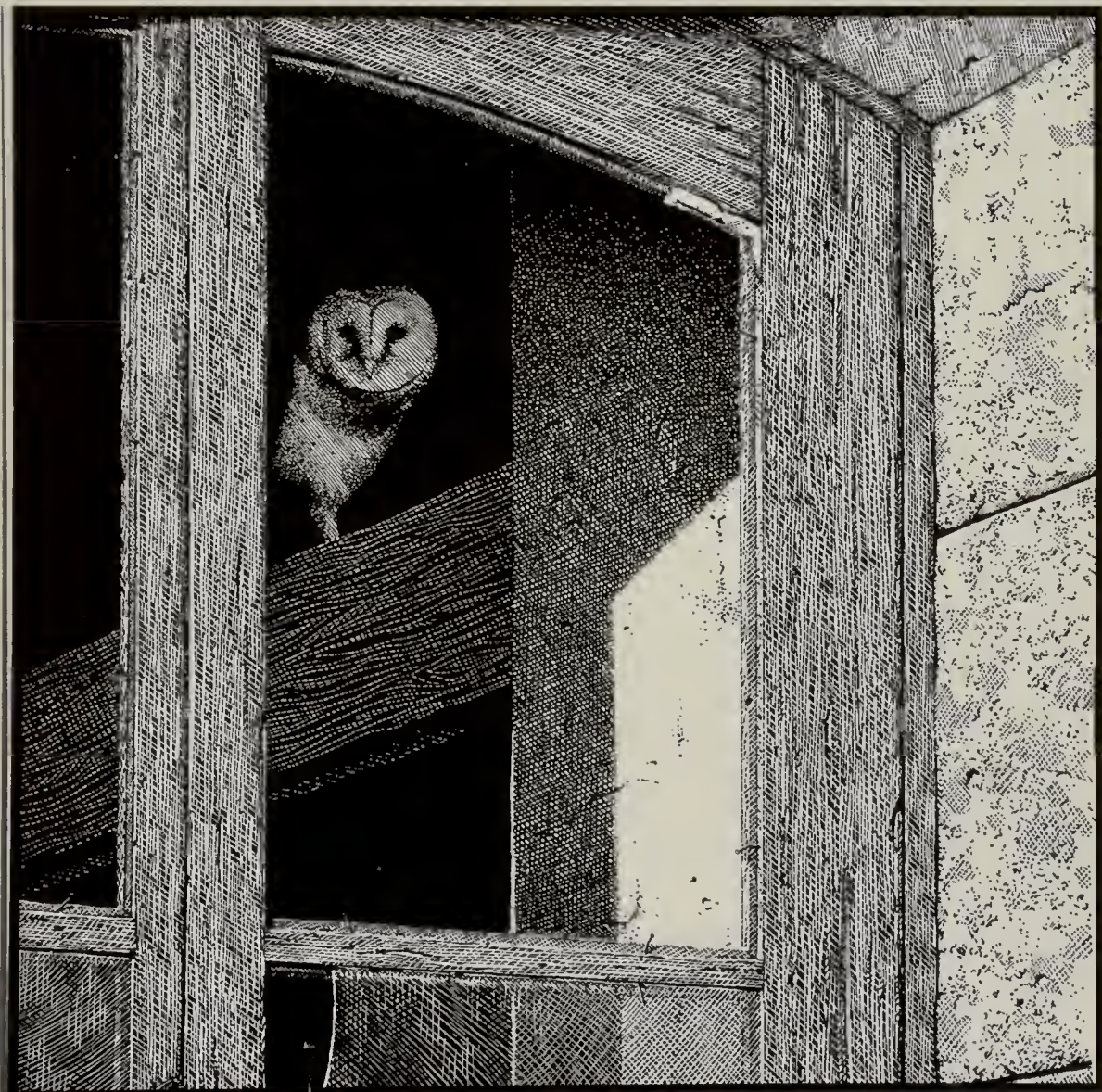
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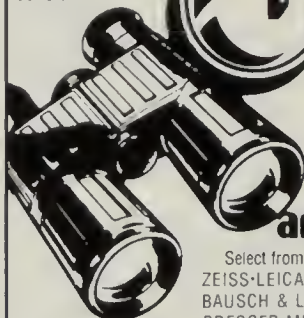
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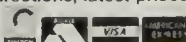
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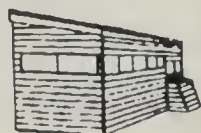
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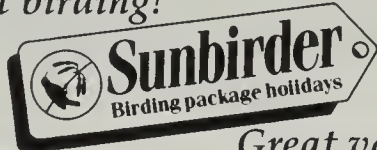
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'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award'



With an increase in entries, the seventeenth BIY was, at the end, extremely close and difficult to judge, with the three finalists all claiming supporters among the judges. Detailed voting on each drawing resulted in the following winners:

BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1995

1st Andrew Stock (Beaminster, Dorset)

2nd Tim Worfolk (Bristol, Avon)

3rd Dan Powell (Fareham, Hampshire)

John M. Walters (Devon) was placed fourth, and the following were also in the final short list: Gordon Dunn (Dorset), Chris Orgill (Nottingham), Anthony Smith (Merseyside) and Andrew Tewson (Dorset).

Although there was an increase in the number of entrants for the award commemorating the late Richard Richardson, we should like to see even more artists aged 21 or under submitting work for this category. For the second year, the winner was:

THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD, 1995

1st Max Andrews (Bath, Avon)

Simon Patient (Essex) was the runner-up.

The judges always enjoy choosing a drawing to receive the PJC Award, set up by David Cook in memory of his wife Pauline. They are free to pick any which attracts their attention for particular artistic merit, design, imagination, ornithological interest and, preferably, most of these. Eventually, our choice had to be made between two contrasting drawings and it fell on a group of Moorhens making a strong, graphic pattern. The winner was:

THE PJC AWARD

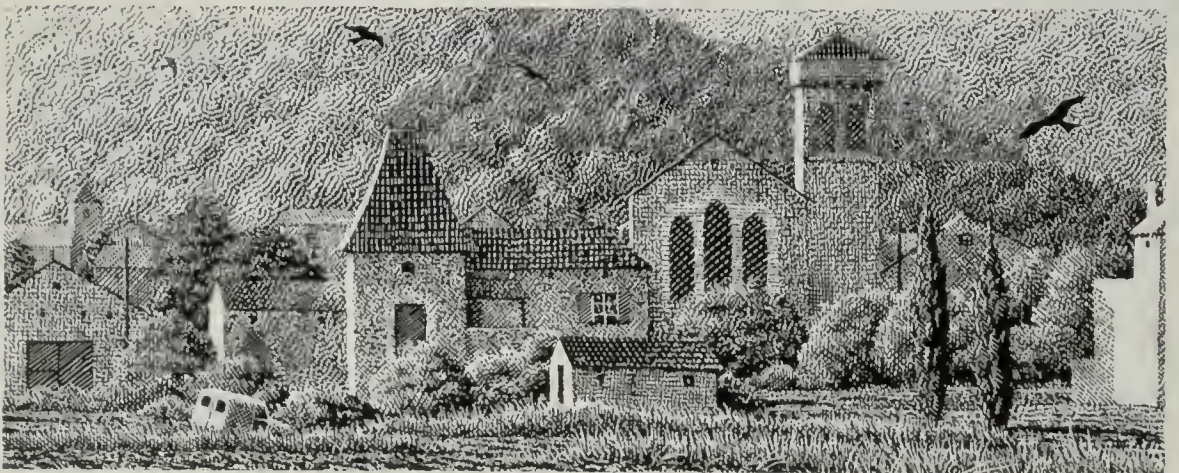
1st George Woodford (Lymington, Hants)

Anthony Smith's dramatic drawing of Spotted Redshanks came a very close second.

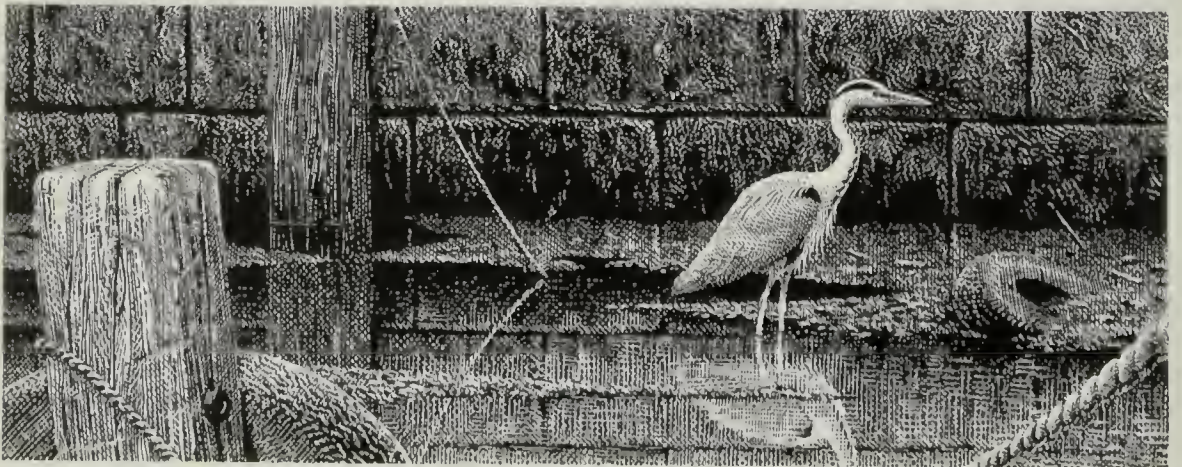
Andrew Stock, the major title-winner, had won the Richard Richardson Award 15 years earlier, and had been placed second in BIY in 1987. Returning after eight years to carry off first prize is an unprecedented and very welcome record. The quartets of drawings by the finalists were all excellent and quite different. We tried hard to find faults with the illustrations, hoping to make the final selection easier, but it was only by voting on individual drawings that we came to the final placings. Tim Worfolk (second) and Dan Powell (third) reversed their positions of last year.



BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* outside my studio window (Andrew Stock)



BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: Black Kites *Milvus migrans* gathering over waste ground by Lagardelle, Lot Valley, France, early morning (Andrew Stock)



BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* in Deptford Creek, London (Andrew Stock)



Pomarine Skuas *Stercorarius pomarinus* (Tim Worfolk)



Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Lostanges, France
(Dan Powell)



Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (Tim Worfolk)



Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (Tim Worfolk)

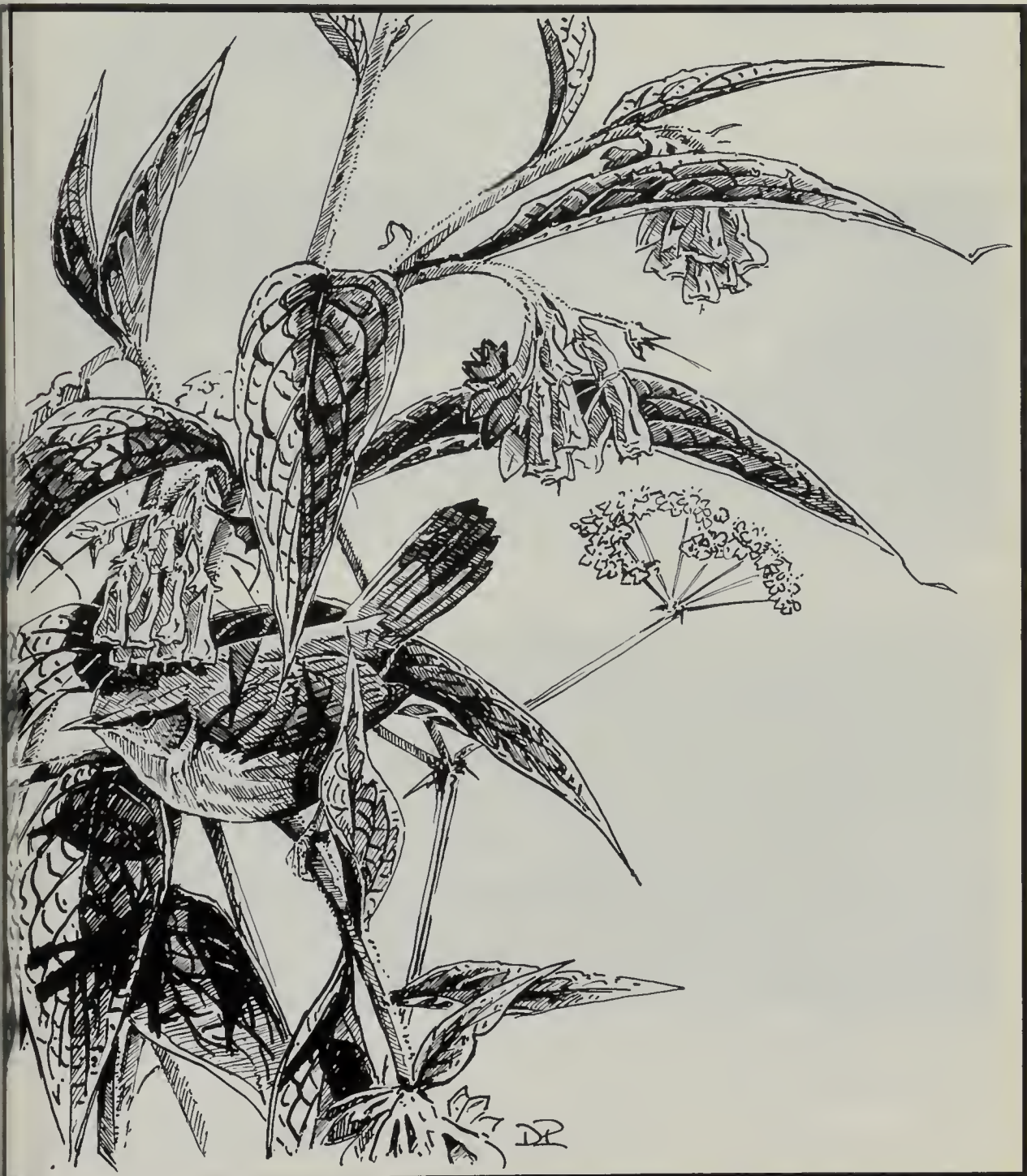
We know of a number of artists who have not submitted work recently who would undoubtedly be highly placed if they did. We also felt that a few 'regulars' did not produce their very best work this year. Past winners can attest to the boost to their careers that BIY has given them, and we do encourage all bird illustrators to 'have a go' next year.

One of Andrew Stock's four drawings is used—as is traditional—as this month's cover design, and the original is for sale in the monthly postal auction. This Barn Owl illustration will also be featured as the frontispiece of volume 88.



RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD winner: Juvenile Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*
(Max Andrews)

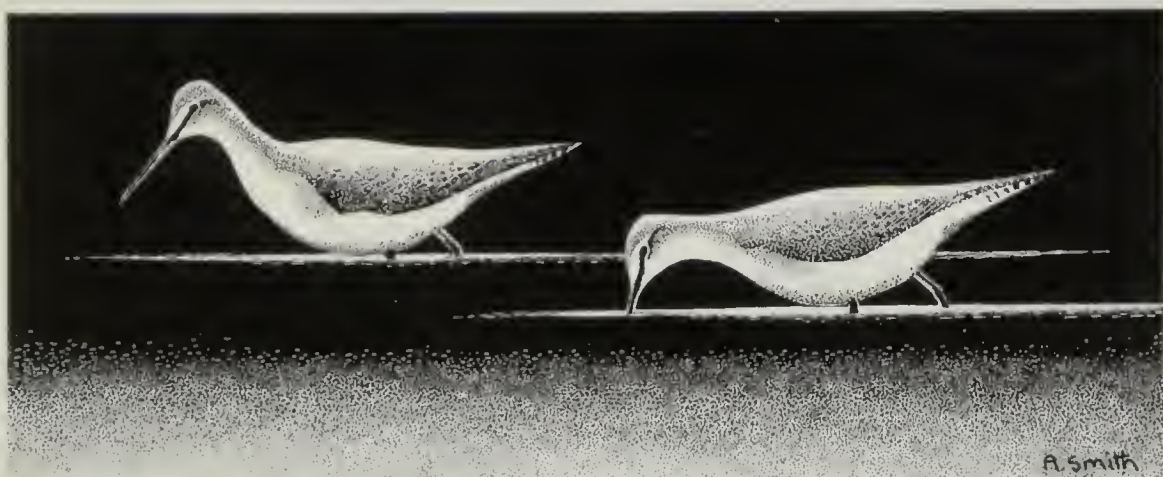
Other illustrations from this year's competition will, as usual, appear on and within the covers of *BB* over the coming 12 months. Most of the artists who took part will have one or more drawings shown on the BIY display at the Society of Wildlife Artists Exhibition at the Mall Galleries in London during 27th July to 11th August 1995 and at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water during 18th-20th August.



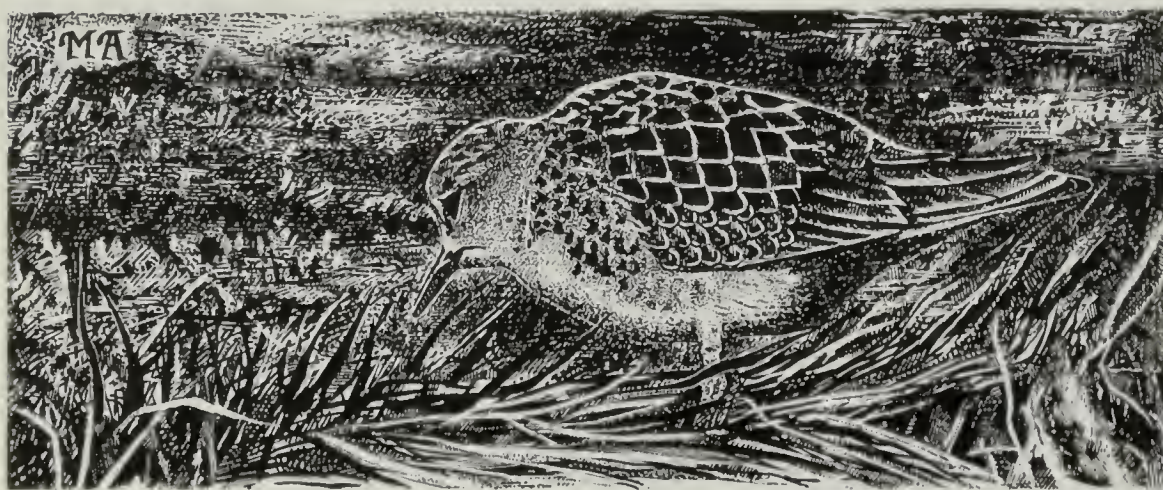
Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* and Common Comfrey *Symphytum officinale*, Titchfield Haven, Hampshire (Dan Powell)



PJC AWARD winner: Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus*: amusing family feeding antics (George Woodford)



Spotted Redshanks *Tringa erythropus* (Anthony Smith)



RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD winner: Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Axe Estuary, Avon, October 1993 (Max Andrews)

This is the final year of sponsorship of BIY by *Kowa* telescopes, and we are extremely grateful for their eight years of interest and splendid prizes.

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Migrations of an adult Spotted Eagle tracked by satellite



Bernd-U. Meyburg, Xavier Eichaker, Christiane Meyburg and Patrick Paillat

The Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* breeds from eastern Poland to the Pacific Ocean, in southeast Siberia and Manchuria. Despite this extensive breeding range, the biology of this rare species has been very little studied (Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* 1971; Cramp & Simmons 1980; Meyburg 1994). This applies especially to the eagle's migrations. Ringing has so far revealed very little (Mikhelson & Viksne 1982).

True, there are numerous overwintering areas known in southern Europe, southern Asia, the Middle East, including Egypt, and elsewhere, but hardly anything is known about the migration routes, the migration speed, and the length of time spent at stop-over sites, at resting areas and in the winter quarters.

Within the framework of a research programme on Steppe Eagles *A. nipalensis* by means of satellite telemetry, we captured an adult Spotted Eagle in Arabia which we also equipped with a transmitter. Since an adult specimen of this species had never before been captured and fitted with either a conventional or a satellite transmitter, our findings are given here in detail.

Satellite telemetry has been developing since its first experimental application in 1970 to track the movements of animals. Most early efforts were necessarily associated with large terrestrial and marine mammals because of the size of transmitter units. It was not until the mid 1980s that technology permitted effective deployment on large avian species, and it was only as recently as 1992 that a 48-50 g satellite transmitter, technically called platform transmitter terminal (PTT), became available, small and light enough to be used for birds of the size of Spotted Eagle and Lesser Spotted Eagle *A. pomarina* (Meyburg *et al.* 1993).

Procedure

Satellite telemetry currently uses the Argos Data Collection and Location System,

which is a co-operative international project of the Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales of France (CNES), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Details are given in Appendix 1.

On 24th October 1993, we caught an adult Spotted Eagle north of Taif¹ in Saudi Arabia. Its weight was 1,900 g and its wing-length 53 cm. A 48-g PTT was attached as a backpack with teflon ribbon and sewn with biodegradable cotton thread (plate 98). Transmitter life can be varied with timer set-up. The unit was set on an 8-hours-on/96-hours-off schedule.

For the computer calculations of distances covered between Argos locations, we used an integrated global mapping system displaying a true Mercator projection. For plotting the breeding area in western Siberia and the stop-over areas in Saudi Arabia, coloured maps of the Russian ordnance survey with a scale of 1:200,000 were used, and for the winter quarters in the Yemen a map with a scale of 1:250,000.



Plate 98. Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* fitted with platform transmitter terminal, Saudi Arabia, October 1993 (B.-U. Meyburg)

Results

Between 24th October 1993 (day of capture and release of the bird) and 8th June 1994 (last day when a location was received and when the battery voltage became too low), 96 locations of different quality were obtained through Argos and the bird was tracked over a total distance of 6,390 km excluding local movements in the winter quarters and stop-over sites (see fig. 1).

¹ The geographical co-ordinates of locations mentioned in the text are given in Appendix 2.

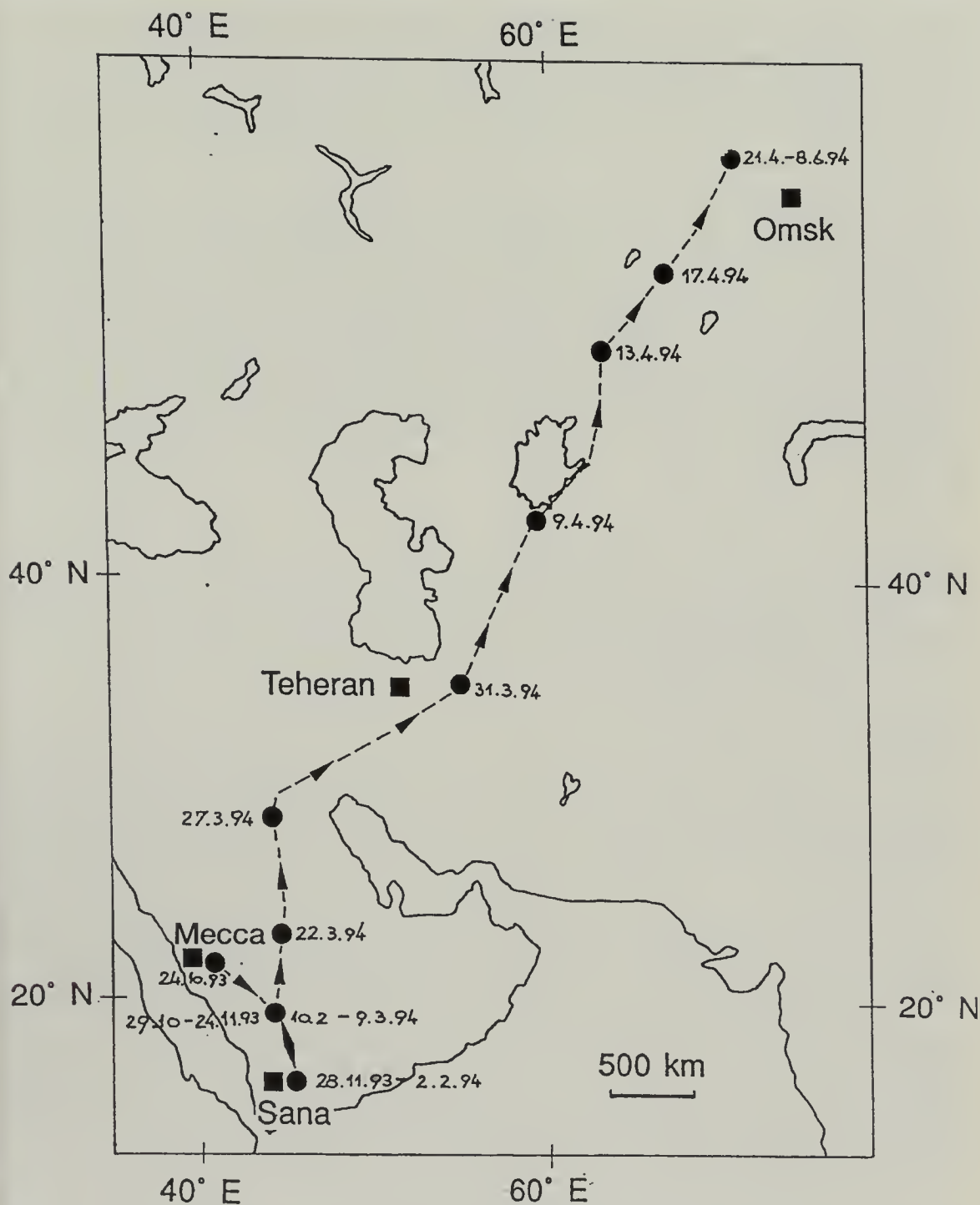


Fig. 1. Migration route of an individual (Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*. This bird was tracked by satellite during the last part of its outward migration and during its return migration from the Yemen to western Siberia, 24th October 1993 to 8th June 1994.

After its release, the bird flew a further 385 km southeastwards to the vicinity of the small village of Al Subaikhah² in southwestern Saudi Arabia. There, from 29th October to 24th November, it exploited a home range of about 65 square kilometres. It then moved a further 465 km south into the Yemen, where it remained from 28th November 1993 to 2nd February 1994, in an area around Wadi Adhanah³ 30 km southwest of Marib (104 km east of Sana) in the south of the Sirwan district north of Jebel Suhayfah (2,610 m above sea level). There,

² & ³ See Appendix 2.

its home range, taking only the best locations into consideration, encompassed about 50 square kilometres.

Following this stay of little more than two months at the southernmost point of its migration, the bird moved back to its former stop-over site near Al Subaikhah in Saudi Arabia, where it remained between 11th and 28th February.

Further return migration then continued in a leisurely fashion. Up to 22nd March, it had progressed only another 545 km northwards, but it covered the next 593 km within the space of four days, and at a location⁴ close to the Saudi Arabian-Iraqi border west of Kuwait it swung northeastwards. From there, it crossed over the 4,000-m-high Zagros Mountains and the highlands of Iran. It then journeyed along the southern slopes of the Elburz Mountains, where⁵ on 31st March another change of direction occurred, taking it more to the north. From this point, it crossed the nearly 3,000-m-high Koppet Dagh Mountains to the border of Turkmenistan and made in a straight line for the southern shore of the Aral Sea, where it arrived on 9th April. It then followed the southeastern shore of the Sea, after which it flew more or less northeast to its probable breeding area in the southern part of the West Siberian lowlands⁶, about 196 km northwest of Omsk, arriving there on 21st April. It remained in this area until the last location on 8th June. Unfortunately, the locations were not precise enough to enable us to calculate its home range.

Discussion

Of all the eagles in the genus *Aquila*, the Spotted Eagle is the most strongly attached to water and wetlands. This is equally true of both its breeding and its wintering areas. It is therefore surprising to find this bird spending the winter in the completely arid landscape of the southwest of the Arabian peninsula. The Spotted Eagle was known to be a winter visitor to Arabia, but only in areas of wetland. Further examples need to be tracked in order to establish whether the species is more adaptable in its winter quarters than was hitherto supposed.

The return migration followed almost the shortest possible route. Only the Arabian Gulf near Kuwait was by-passed in a rather circuitous manner, as was the southeastern end of the Caspian Sea, as would appear to be necessary if the shortest possible flightpath was to be followed. The by-passing of the Caspian Sea was probably in order to avoid flying over the Elburz Mountains.

It took the bird a full seven weeks to cover the first 1,010 km from the wintering grounds in the Yemen. It was not until 22nd March that the bird actually appeared to be 'on the move', and the remaining part of the return migration, amounting to 4,516 km, was accomplished within barely a month, with an average of about 150 km being covered daily. The highest average rate of 280 km per day was reached at the end of March, during the crossing of Iraq and Iran.

Acknowledgments

The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) kindly supplied funds for the transmitter. Prof. Abdulaziz H. Abuzinada, Secretary General of the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (Saudi Arabia), gave us permission to capture the eagle and

^{4, 5, 6} See Appendix 2.

arranged logistic support. Dr Mark R. Fuller was very helpful when we started satellite telemetry. Dr Stephane Ostrowski and Philippe Gaucher of the National Wildlife Research Center in Saudi Arabia helped us in the field. We also thank R. D. Chancellor for linguistic help. Prof. K. Graszynski read a first draft of the manuscript and was helpful in various other ways. Friedhelm Weick kindly made the heading drawing and the map.

Summary

The migration and wintering grounds of an adult Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* were studied for the first time by means of satellite telemetry. During the 228 days following equipment of the eagle, 96 locations were procured and the bird could be tracked over a stretch of 6,390 km. The eagle spent little more than two months, from the end of November to the beginning of February, in its winter quarters in north Yemen. A stop-over site in southwestern Saudi Arabia was occupied for several weeks on both outward and return migration. Surprisingly, this eagle spent several months in arid desert regions. The total distance between winter quarters and breeding area in western Siberia was 5,526 km, of which 4,516 km were covered on the return migration in scarcely a month.

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Patrick Paillat, National Wildlife Research Center, P.O. Box 1086, Taif, Saudi Arabia

Appendix 1. Explanation of Argos Data Collection and Location System

This system includes equipment in Tiros-N satellites and a network of satellite tracking stations and communications links that transfer satellite data to processing centres in Toulouse (France) and Landover, MD (USA). The near-polar, sun-synchronous orbits of Tiros-N satellites permit coverage of a specific geographic area at approximately the same time each day. Locations of transmitters are estimated from the Doppler shift in its carrier frequency (410.650 MHz).

For normal processing, Argos requires four transmissions, or messages, during an overpass of the satellite to calculate location, but special processing for wildlife research estimates locations from as few as two Doppler measurements. Up to 15th June 1994, Argos graded locations according to precision (i.e. 68% of a series of locations expected within the given distance) with location quality indices (LQ): LQ3 = 150 m, LQ2 = 350 m, LQ1 = 1 km, and LQ0 = undetermined. Within LQ0, Argos also provided an interpretative index, which helped in assessing estimated locations by explaining why normal processing failed.

Appendix 2. Geographical co-ordinates of locations mentioned in the text

¹ Taif, Saudi Arabia 21° 31' N 40° 49' E

² Al Subaikhah, Saudi Arabia 19° 07' N 43° 21' E

³ Wadi Adhanah, Yemen 15° 19' N 45° 07' E

⁴ Location near Saudi Arabian-Iraqi border 29° 23' N 44° 13' E

⁵ Location along Elburz Mountains 35° 50' N 55° 44' E

⁶ Probable breeding area in West Siberian lowlands 56° 14' N 71° 24' E



PHOTOSPOT

36. Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*

An article in *British Birds* some 17 years ago (Kitson 1978) was prefaced by the suggestion that Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stemma* and Asian Dowitcher were possible contenders for addition to the British & Irish List. Since then, Long-toed Stint has been added to the List, and Pintail Snipe has been suspected on a number of occasions though there are no confirmed records, but there are no records of Asian Dowitcher for anywhere in the Western Palearctic. The nearest records are of one at Aden in 1958 (Paige 1965), and one in Kenya in 1966 (Smart & Forbes-Watson 1971), but as a long-distance migrant it remains a strong candidate for addition to the Western Palearctic List, perhaps even for the British List. Maybe this is one reason why Asian Dowitcher is one of the most sought-after species by those birding in the Far East.

It has always been regarded as a scarce species. Estimates of the World population have been of the order of 5,000 individuals, but, following a report of 10,000 wintering in Sumatra, it has been suggested that the total population might be as high as 25,000 (Howes & Parish 1989). Sumatra has long been thought of as the most important wintering location, but some are regularly reported on passage at Hong Kong and in Thailand (Lekagul *et al.* 1985; Tipper 1993), and smaller numbers are known to winter as far south as Australia, where the total is perhaps 150 (e.g. Lane 1987). Most of these occur in northern Western Australia, where there have been counts of 131 at Port Hedland Saltworks, and at Broome, where there were 103 as recently as March 1995.

Asian Dowitchers arrive in Western Australia from late August, staying until April, when the majority depart, though a few non-breeders probably stay through the Northern Hemisphere summer. By the beginning of April, many are in full breeding plumage, though they can easily be overlooked amongst the thousands of Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* with which they congregate, particularly at high-tide roosts, at which these photographs were taken. Since Asian Dowitchers are coloured very similarly to the Bar-tailed Godwits, and closely approach them in size, being considerably larger than the two North American dowitcher species, they take some seeking out. The accompanying photographs show this similarity, and also show the thick, straight, blunt-tipped all-black bill, held at 30° below the horizontal, which is an excellent field mark.

There appear to be few published photographs of any but distant views of this species, so it should not be difficult to imagine my thrill on discovering no fewer than 16 (possibly more) in an approaching flock of Bar-tailed Godwits and Great Knots *Calidris tenuirostris*, and then, within a few minutes, having these handsome waders at quite close photographic range. The experience was one of my all-time wader-photography highlights.

R. J. Chandler

2 Rusland Avenue, Orpington, Kent BR6 8AU



Plate 99. Three Asian Dowitchers *Limnodromus semipalmatus* (centre and right) with Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* and Great Knots *Calidris tenuirostris*, Western Australia, April 1995 (R. J. Chandler)

Plate 100. Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* in fresh adult summer plumage (with Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* behind), Western Australia, April 1995 (R. J. Chandler)



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ANNOUNCEMENT

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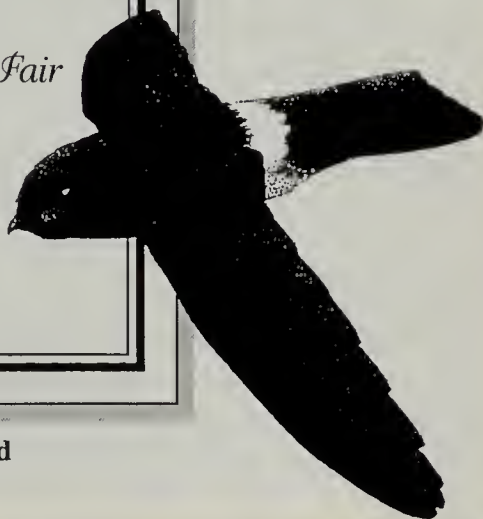
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**10-YEAR
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The White-winged Lark in Britain

Tony Marr and Richard Porter,
on behalf of the British Ornithologists' Union
Records Committee

As with the Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*, the British records of which were recently reviewed by the BOURC (Vinicombe & Hopkin 1993), the White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera* is one of a small number of rarities on the British List that have remained extremely infrequent and unlikely visitors to these islands. Breeding in dry grass steppes from Kazakhstan to eastern Europe, its range has decreased in the last 100 years with the ploughing-up of the steppes.

The White-winged Lark migrates only short distances to winter to the south and west, mainly within the former Soviet Union, although regularly as far west as Romania. There has been a small number of westward vagrants to central and northwestern Europe, including, until recently, five British records of seven individuals between 1869 and 1981. There are no Irish records.

The British records were:

1. Brighton, East Sussex, 22nd November 1869.
2. Three, Hove, East Sussex, 15th November 1917.
3. Between Rye and Camber, East Sussex, 19th August 1933.
4. Hilfield Park Reservoir, Hertfordshire, 12th-17th August 1955.
5. King's Lynn, Norfolk, 22nd-24th October 1981.

Several other records from Sussex were dismissed among the 'Hastings Rarities' (Nicholson & Ferguson-Lees 1962).

Up to 1992, naturally occurring birds in Britain and Ireland were placed in Category A of the British & Irish List if they had occurred within the previous 50 years, or in Category B if they had not been seen for half a century. Under this definition, White-winged Lark was in Category A on the basis of the 1955 and 1981 records. In 1992, however, Category B was redefined as containing

those species not seen since 1958, when the British Birds Rarities Committee was formed (BOU 1992). This change resulted in the 1981 record becoming the sole basis for keeping White-winged Lark in Category A. This prompted a review of the 1981 record and all the older records of the species in Britain.

Extensive research had been carried out into the identification of this species during the three BBRC circulations of the 1981 King's Lynn record, which ultimately led to its acceptance.

The BOURC is aware of the difficulty of applying modern criteria to old descriptions. Allowances are always made for this, within the context of the need for records to remain convincing on the basis of the available evidence. The review of the records of White-winged Lark led to the confirmation of the 1869 East Sussex bird and the acceptance of the 1981 Norfolk bird, thus retaining the species in Category A. None of the other three records proved to be acceptable beyond all reasonable doubt, as the possibility of misidentification could not be eliminated.

Distribution

The White-winged Lark is endemic to the former USSR, breeding from Dagestan, the lower Volga River area, through central and northern Kazakhstan to about 80°E. It is found mainly in the Kirghiz Steppe, an area of dry, short-grass plains with orache *Atriplex*, wormwood *Artemisia* and feather grass *Stipa* interspersed with bare, open ground (Dementiev & Gladkov 1968). The amount of suitable breeding habitat has no doubt declined since the opening-up of these 'Virgin Lands' for agriculture. Since 1954, over 25 million ha—an area roughly the size of Italy—have been ploughed for cereals in Kazakhstan alone (Larkin & Burambayev 1980).

The species is migratory, wintering in the Ukraine, Crimea, Caucasus, Transcaspia and Iran. In severe winters, it has also occurred several times in Romania. Some winter in the southern part of the breeding range, but these are thought to be migrants from farther north rather than residents. In spring, they arrive on the breeding grounds in April and early May. Autumn departure takes place in August and early September, with strong passage noted in Trans Volga in late August. The species forms large flocks outside the breeding season (Dementiev & Gladkov 1968).

The range of vagrancy includes parts of the former USSR as far west as Moscow, as well as Switzerland, Italy, Poland, Belgium and Heligoland in Germany.

Identification

Few European ornithologists have had the opportunity to observe White-winged Larks in the field. As a result, the species is little known, and difficulties have occurred over the identification of vagrants in the West. It was not until the early 1980s that the relaxation of travel restrictions in the USSR provided some British ornithologists with the chance to study the species, particularly in the steppes of central Kazakhstan (see Robertson 1986).

White-winged Lark is slightly larger than Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* and smaller than Calandra Lark *M. calandra*. There is some discrepancy between actual

measurements and appearance in the field, particularly in flight (Witherby *et al.* 1941; Dementiev & Gladkov 1968). Though wing-length is intermediate between those of Sky Lark and Calandra Lark, White-winged looks noticeably long-winged in flight. Soviet authors have likened it to a shorebird in flight. This long-winged appearance seems to result from the visual effect of the very broad white trailing-edge to the wing. From measurements, the tail is proportionally shorter than that of Sky Lark, but in the field this is not apparent, White-winged Lark looking quite long-tailed, again as a result of the white trailing-edge to the wing.

First impressions are of a pale brownish lark, with a 'bare-faced' expression, and a white panel in the closed wing. The closest comparison is with an upright female Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*, rather than with another lark, though this is less so in winter. In flight, the striking three-tone wing pattern even recalls Sabine's Gull *L. sabini*.

In adult plumage, the perched White-winged Lark is very distinctive. The male has an unstreaked rufous crown and ear-coverts, often with reddish patches on the sides of the breast and reddish-brown uppertail-coverts; the female has a grey-brown crown, streaked darker and with much less rufous on the uppertail-coverts. Both sexes show a rufous-chestnut forewing. First-winters, however, are less distinct, being more streaked, especially on the breast, with less rufous tones to the crown, forewing and uppertail-coverts. The main danger lies with partially albinistic individuals of other larks. Though rare, these are perhaps not so rare in Europe as are genuine White-winged Larks. Patches of albinistic feathers are often symmetrical, suggesting a natural, rather than an aberrant plumage. The combination of chestnut crown and lesser coverts, however, together with the facial pattern and very dark primaries and central wing area, should provide a clear distinction from any other species of lark showing aberrant white secondaries. Snow Bunting's bill shape and colour, together with white lesser and/or median coverts, should rule out that species in any plumage.

The possibility of confusion with Snow Buntings or with partially albinistic individuals of other larks had to be considered carefully by the BOURC during its review. Several members of both the BBRC and the BOURC have had recent experience of White-winged Larks in Kazakhstan.

The five British claims

The 1869 East Sussex record

The specimen, a female, is now in the Booth Museum of Natural History in Brighton (plate 101). It was taken alive in a net near Brighton, East Sussex, on 22nd November 1869, and reported by Mr Frederick Bond of South Hampstead, London, who saw it very shortly after capture and was quite sure that it was 'truly wild'. He first thought that it was 'a young snow finch *Montifringilla nivalis*' (Bond 1870a), correcting the identification the following month (Bond 1870b; see also Rowley 1870).

The specimen was promptly acquired by Mr Thomas Monk of Lewes, East Sussex, and, after his death, obtained for the Booth Museum.

Interestingly, the lark was caught 'in the company of a flock of about two dozen Snow Buntings . . . one of which it was at first considered to be.' Although the specimen is faded, the photographs show the comparatively long, dark-brown



Plate 101. Display of three White-winged Larks *Melanocorypha leucoptera* in the Booth Museum of Natural History, Brighton. The display case (no. 343) contains specimens numbered 208045, 208046 and 208047. The individual caught on 22nd November 1869 is the one standing on the right (ref. 208047) (Booth Museum)

primaries, edged white on the outer webs and tipped with buffish, and the white panel in the closed wing, formed by the secondaries. The bill is yellow, but this is presumed to have been an error when preparing the specimen. The identification of the specimen was accepted by the Committee and the bird was considered to have been of natural origin.

There was a vigorous trade in wild birds, particularly Sky Larks, caught on the Brighton Downs in the late nineteenth century and these were sold in local markets and shops. There are records from the Brighton area in the 1860s of Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* in October 1863; Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* in November 1864; Rustic Bunting *E. rustica* in October 1867; Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* in December 1868; and Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* in the last week of September 1869. With most of these birds, the timing is consistent with modern records.

Three, Hove, East Sussex, 15th November 1917

These birds were seen by John Walpole-Bond 'for some time at very close quarters . . . on the upper part of the beach just below the front at West Hove.' The description in his *A History of Sussex Birds* (1938) states that 'the hall marks, so to speak, of the species were very noticeable, to wit, the distinct chestnut of the primary-coverts and lesser wing-coverts and the snowiness of the secondaries. Two of the birds by the rusty-red of their crowns were at once marked as males; the third individual—the one with the dark brown head—was just as obviously a lady.'

The chestnut wing-coverts would appear to rule out Snow Bunting; there is, however, no description of size, structure, bare parts or behaviour. It would have

been more believable if the birds had been Snow Buntings and the habitat would have been more likely—the upper part of the beach at West Hove is pure shingle.

There are two unexplained aspects of this record. First, it remained unpublished until 1938. Secondly, it is not amongst the records listed by Witherby *et al.* in the *Handbook of British Birds*, vol. 1 (1941). Perhaps the authors did not believe the record?

The record is inadequately described and the habitat and number of birds are unlikely. The Committee was unable to recommend the continued acceptance of the record.

Between Rye and Camber, East Sussex, 19th August 1933

This record was described by Allen (1933), who was 'bicycling along the road from Rye to Camber that runs alongside the golf links' and 'saw a strange bird standing sentinel-like on a hump on the thin, brown turf.' He stated that 'the most striking feature was that its shoulders and crown were a bright, rusty red, the shoulders being brightest.' 'Another prominent feature was a bar of pure white on each wing.' It flew off silently, 'giving me the impression as it flew of a patch of white on the under surface of the wings.' It was the size of 'a rather large Skylark.'

Although he wrote down the description in a notebook at the time, the description is vague in places, rather too colourful in others and not at all convincing. Some members of the BOURC were not certain that it was even a lark. Walpole-Bond (1938) considered 19th August to be 'an extraordinarily early date for this species to be in this country'.

The BOURC unanimously decided that, for such a rare species, this record could not now be upheld.

Hilfield Park Reservoir, Hertfordshire, 12th-17th August 1955

The circumstances of this record were fully described by Sage & Jenkins (1956). The bird was found by B. L. Sage; watched by him and A. R. Jenkins on 13th and 14th; and subsequently by various other observers, including F. H. Jones and H. P. Medhurst, until 17th. It was considered to be an adult female.

The BBRC studied the description in the course of assessing the 1981 Norfolk record, and concluded that the record should be reviewed by the BOURC. BBRC members with experience of White-winged Lark on its breeding grounds considered that the description of the Hertfordshire bird did not exclude the possibility of a partially albinistic Sky Lark.

Certain features supported the identification as a White-winged Lark:

1. Shorter tail and bulkier body than Sky Lark.
2. The wing pattern, with large white patch on secondaries, white underwing, chestnut on lesser coverts and pale outer web to 2nd primary (although this last feature, which is obvious on skins, is not usually noticeable in the field).
3. Lack of a crest.
4. Wings held slightly drooped.

Apparently against the identification as a White-winged Lark were:

1. The one reference to wing shape at rest or in flight suggests a Sky Lark-like shape and appearance, apart from the white secondaries. White-winged Lark, as described earlier, has a very distinctive long-winged appearance, both in flight, when it immediately attracts comment, and on the ground.
2. The white 'wing-bar' is not clearly described. It is so striking in flight, and contrasts so much with the rest of the wing, that it usually evokes exclamation and comparisons with Redshank *Tringa totanus* and even Sabine's Gull.
3. There is no mention of the primary coverts, which should be tinged with rufous and are a diagnostic feature.
4. There is no mention of the hopping. This is a regular habit and produces a gait very unlike that typical of larks.
5. The underparts and face pattern as described do not tally with those of White-winged Lark.
6. The tail was cocked in flight just above the level of the back when it glided down in a manner similar to Sky Lark; White-winged Larks observed by those BBRC and BOURC members who have seen the species have not shown this feature.

On reading Iain Robertson's paper on the identification of White-winged Lark (Robertson 1986), one of the original observers, Howard Medhurst, contacted the BBRC. He wrote that he had been unhappy about the record for some years and now believed the bird to have been an aberrant Sky Lark.

With the recent clarification of some of the identification criteria for White-winged Lark, the unexpected date and the withdrawal by one observer from support of the record, the Committee decided that the record could no longer be considered proven.

The 1981 Norfolk record

This bird was seen at King's Lynn Sugar Beet Factory on 22nd October 1981 by J. Lines, and on 24th by J. A. W. Moyes, who had been told of its presence by the finder. On each occasion, only the single observer was present.

The record was accepted by the BBRC on its third circulation. At the time of the first circulation, none of the members of BBRC had seen the species alive, so expert advice was sought. A split decision the second time around was followed by a third circulation, in 1985-86, which led to acceptance. By then, three members of BBRC, including Iain Robertson, had seen the species.

The record then passed to the BOURC, which accepted the record and retained the species in Category A of the British & Irish List (BOU 1992). The view was taken that the descriptions were sufficient to eliminate confusion species (including Mongolian Lark *M. mongolica*) or a partially albinistic Sky Lark. The bird was considered to have been an immature male.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the Booth Museum of Natural History, Brighton, for allowing us to photograph the 1869 specimen and for providing copies of pages from the Museum's *Catalogue*; and to the Jourdain Society for copies of Walpole-Bond's original diaries.

Summary

Five claims of White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera* from Britain have been reviewed by the BOURC. The distribution and identification of the species are summarised. Three of the British records are now considered to be unproven.

White-winged Lark remains in Category A of the British & Irish List on the basis of a specimen from East Sussex in November 1869 and a sight record in Norfolk in October 1981.

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Richard Porter, 21 Roundhouse Drive, West Perry, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire
PE18 0D7



LOOKING BACK

Twenty-five years ago, August 1970 was notable for thousands of Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus* off southern Irish headlands, and an influx of Scandinavian migrants, dominated by Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla*, with at least 150 at 45 localities, mostly on the English East and South Coasts, accompanied by Whinchats *Saxicola rubetra*, Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca*, Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina* and Barred Warblers *Sylvia nisoria* (*Brit. Birds* 63: 397-400).

The start of a habit: 'On 29th March 1970 a female Siskin *Carduelis spinus* flew to the bird table in my garden at Stapleford, Cambridge. At the time a Greenfinch *C. chloris* was feeding on peanuts in a plastic mesh bag suspended nearby; when this bird left with a nut the Siskin immediately took its place and commenced to peck at the nuts until it was dislodged by another Greenfinch. The Siskin made two such feeding attempts before finally flying away. B. HARRUP' (*Brit. Birds* 63: 344, August 1970).



The 'British Birds' Achievement Award

This award, established earlier this year (*Brit. Birds* 88: 46), recognises an exceptional contribution to ornithology by a single person or a team, a charitable organisation or a commercial company. The first award was to the whole team responsible for the nine-volume *Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1977-94). The Achievement Award is not annual, but is announced when the occasion demands.

The recipients of the second Award have now been nominated, and we are delighted to report that Trevor Poyser and Anna Poyser have accepted this recognition of the innovative publishing achievements of T. & A. D. Poyser Ltd.

From its first title, *Breeding Birds of Britain and Ireland* in June 1973, to the forty-fifth, *The Kestrel* in March 1990, T. & A. D. Poyser produced a series of natural history (mainly ornithological) books of which Britain can be proud. It is all the more remarkable since it is wholly the result of the labours, dedication and expertise of two people, Trevor and Anna. The books, known affectionately as 'Poyser's', are collected by book-lovers as well as by ornithologists, for not only are the subjects well selected and the contents well written and well edited, but the books themselves are well designed and beautifully produced.

It is not surprising that four of the 15 books chosen as the 'British Birds' Best Bird Book of the Year during 1980-94 have been Poyser's, or that three of the top titles chosen as 'Essential reference books' by the eminent members of the Behaviour Notes Panel were Poyser's (*Brit. Birds* 88: 284).

The Poyser list includes titles as prestigious and influential as any in that renowned series, the 'New Naturalists' published by Collins Natural History, which recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.

A startling achievement by a two-man team!

Trevor & Anna Poyser retired in 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 630), and the company T. & A. D. Poyser Ltd has since then been in the experienced hands of Academic Press, with Dr Andrew Richford as Senior Editor. This Achievement Award is, however, made not to the company, but personally to Trevor and Anna for establishing what has become a national institution and, to birdwatchers, a household name synonymous with excellence.

The 'British Birds' Achievement Award:

**Trevor Poyser and Anna Poyser, founders of the publishers
T. & A. D. Poyser**



REVIEWS

Birds of Britain and Europe, with North Africa and the Middle East.

By Hermann Heinzel, Richard Fitter & John Parslow.

HarperCollins, London, 1995. 384 pages; over 3,000 colour illustrations; over 500 maps. ISBN 0-00-219894-0. Paperback £9.99.

The first edition of this 'Collins pocket guide' appeared 23 years ago. It has undergone a number of mostly minor revisions since, but has now been, and I quote, 'completely re-designed, repainted, rewritten, revised and updated'.

Compared with the first edition, of which I still possess a (well-worn) copy, the plates are, indeed, largely redrawn, with the incorporation of more plumages and flying birds. Numerous additional small illustrations of, for example, heads, bills and more flying birds appear on the facing text page. One can spot a number of original paintings that have been lifted from the old edition, but the great majority are new. To highlight just a few changes, I was pleased to see that the amazingly long-necked swans and geese of the first edition now have better, if not perfect, proportions, though I do not care for the new 'scaly' effect of the grey-goose plumages. The two pages of flying ducks have disappeared, with more flying birds placed on the species plates, though there is now a useful double-page dealing with duck hybrids. The original double-page spread showing just 19 raptors in flight has been replaced by two spreads with over 100 illustrations. Another addition is that all the accidentals are now

illustrated. In general, the colours are good, certainly much better than in the first edition, though perhaps some of the reds and oranges are just a little overdone.

The maps have been completely revised and include more detail, even though reduced in size. There are now maps for all species except vagrants, though some are tiny. Was it really worth inserting 10 × 8 mm maps for both Bolle's *Columba bollii* and Laurel Pigeon *C. junoniae*, on which one is meant to discern that there are coloured dots off the African coast, when the text states that both occur in the Canary Islands?

The text, too, has been improved, and this new edition represents a significant advance over past ones. Everyone has his or her favourite field guide and, for many, Lars Jonsson's *Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East* (1992), with its greater amount of detail in both paintings and text, will remain pre-eminent. It is, however, heavier on the pocket in both senses, being substantially larger and more than twice the price. I predict continuing popularity for this much-improved Collins field guide.

Malcolm Ogilvie

One Pair of Eyes.

By Donald Watson.

Arlequin Press, Chelmsford, 1994. 151 pages; 85 colour illustrations; 50 black-and-white illustrations. ISBN 0-9522019-5X. £55.00.

This book is another quality limited edition from Arlequin Press, this time featuring the paintings and drawings of Donald Watson. The 80 or so paintings span his career and most are previously unpublished. The text is also by Donald Watson, and is mainly about birds and his Galloway surroundings; the anecdotes, often prompted by the paintings, make a good read. Always a strong advocate

of working directly from life, his loose 'on-site' landscapes reveal a delightful spontaneity and freshness, with a vibrant use of colour. Happily, these qualities translate to the tighter studio works. In most, his birds are skilfully 'incidental' focal points.

Being a limited edition, this book is expensive. Nevertheless, it is warmly recommended.

Alan Harris

An Exaltation of Skylarks: in prose and poetry. Compiled by Stewart Beer. (SMH Books, Pulborough, 1995. 227 pages. ISBN 0-9512619-7-5. £12.95) From Theocritus (circa 310-250 BC) to the present day, via William Shakespeare, Gerard Manley Hopkins and Henry Williamson.

JTRS

Collins Checkbook: British Birds. Compiled by Michael Chinery. (HarperCollins, London, 1995. 128 pages. ISBN 0-00-220022-8. Paperback £4.99) A beginners' ticklist, with single photographs of 230 species.

JTRS

The Taxonomy and Species of Birds of Australia and its Territories. By Leslie Christidis and Walter E. Boles. (RAOU, Melbourne, 1994. 112 pages. ISBN 1-875122-06-0. Paperback \$18.00) The main interest for ornithologists outside Australasia will be the complete checklist of Australian birds (which it is planned to revise at least every three or four years). Species are listed with both scientific and English names, the latter generally following *Recommended English Names for Australian Birds* (RAOU 1978), but with changes to accord with international usage following *British Birds* (86: 1-2) for Palearctic species and Sibley & Monroe (1990) for other regions. The 23-page checklist is followed by 46 pages of discussion on taxonomic decisions taken and other changes, such as the removal of Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* from the main list, since the introduced population is now extinct. With 19 pages of references, this is a very clearly set-out, authoritative and useful reference, essential for anyone seriously interested in the birds of Australasia.

JTRS

Bird Behaviour. By Louise Dawson & Mike Langman. (Hamlyn, London, 1995. 48 pages. ISBN 0-600-57981-6. £7.99) This guide, which is aimed at 8- to 14-year-olds, continues the same excellent standards as the previous three in the series. It deals with its subject in a very readable manner and is clearly written by people who understand the interests of young birdwatchers. This book should encourage its readers to enjoy watching birds and not simply to tick them, and for this reason alone it should be on every young birdwatcher's bookshelf.

David Parnaby

Birds in the Yorkshire Museum. By M. L. Denton. (The Yorkshire Museum, York, 1995. 224 pages. ISBN 0-905807-10-3. Paperback £7.50) This is a nicely produced catalogue of the bird collections of the Yorkshire Museum, which comprise 5,000 skins, mounts, skeletons and eggs. All data are included, where these exist, and there is a useful cross-referencing list of material by species.

Clemency Fisher

Follow That Bird!: around the world with a passionate bird-watcher. By Bill Oddie. (Robson Books, London, 1994. 172 pages. ISBN 0-86051-919-8. £12.95) The six chapters detail Bill's adventures (actually outnumbered by misadventures) when birding in Morocco, Scilly, India, Ireland, Shetland and Papua New Guinea. The catastrophes and crises are mostly the sort which are not funny at the time (ruined honeymoons, cars stuck in the mud, and unhelpful foreigners), but Bill Oddie's gift for writing turns every episode into an amusing and entertaining anecdote. Recommended light reading for every birdwatcher.

JTRS

The Barn Owl. By Mike Read & Jake Allsop. (Blandford Press, London, 1994. 128 pages; 80 colour photographs; 8 line-drawings. ISBN 0-7137-2349-1. £16.99) A delightful book on one of my (and many other people's) favourite birds. The text gives a good account of the life history of the Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, its habits and conservation problems, with added value from Jake Allsop's many personal observations and anecdotes. Mike Read's photographs cover every possible aspect, from habitat to pellets to birds in all plumages, and have been very well reproduced. Even if the text were not so good as it is, the book would be worth it for these illustrations alone. The dust-jacket photograph is nothing less than stunning.

MAO

A Photographic Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe. By Paul Sterry & Jim Flegg. (New Holland, London, 1995. 144 pages. ISBN 1-85368-413-9. Paperback £6.99) With three-colour thumbnail-size distribution maps, short texts and just single colour photographs (usually showing an adult male) of 252 species.

JTRS

Wildlife in the West Country. By Colin Varnell. (Nigel J. Clarke Publications, Lyme Regis, 1994. 93 pages. ISBN 0-907683-44-4.

£12.95) The photographs make the book, with some marvellous images: a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* with a writhing Eel *Anguilla anguilla*, a Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* flicking its forked tongue, a Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* at full tilt. I wish the short texts included even more information on where, when and how the photographs were taken.

JTRS

A Birder's Guide to Arkansas. By Mel White. (ABA, Colorado, 1995. 272 pages. ISBN 1-878788-09-4. Wire-O binding \$16.95) Well-planned, 'user-friendly' guide to 59 sites, with very clear maps and directions.

JTRS

ALSO RECEIVED

Where to Watch Birds in East Anglia. 3rd edn. By Peter and Margaret Clarke. (Christopher Helm, London, 1995. 266 pages. ISBN 0-7136-4064-2. Paperback £11.99)

Where to Watch Birds in Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire. 2nd edn. By Brian Clews, Andrew Heryet and Paul Trodd. (Christopher Helm, London, 1995. 315 pages. ISBN 0-7136-4002-2. Paperback £12.99)

Vogels van België. Oiseaux de Belgique 1901-1992. By P. Herroelen. (Herroelen, Boutersem, 1995. 60 pages. Paperback £7.00)

Parrots: look who's talking. Video. By Paul Reddish. (BBC Video, London, 1995. 48.53 minutes. £9.99)

Junior Nature Guide: Birds of Great Britain and Europe. By Angela Royston. (Dragon's World, London, 1995. 80 pages. ISBN 1-85028-240-4. £7.95)

Polygyny and Sexual Selection in Red-winged Blackbirds. By William A. Searcy & Ken Yasukawa. (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995. ISBN 0-691-03686-1 (hbk), 0-691-03687-X (pbk). Hardback £45.00, paperback £24.00)



ANNOUNCEMENT

Special offer on 'Britain's Birds'

Britain's Birds, published jointly by the BTO and the JNCC, draws together results from the major monitoring programmes to give a comprehensive annual review of the status of Britain's birds. Three volumes have been published so far, covering 1989-90 (I), 1990-91 (II) and 1991-92 (III).

These volumes are an essential source of reference for the serious birdwatcher or birder and we are delighted that, in co-operation with the BTO, we can now make these books available to *BB* subscribers on the same basis as that enjoyed by BTO members:

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NOTE

Juvenile Spotted Eagle apparently killed by Eagle Owl

On 20th July 1992, during a long-term study of the Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* in northeastern Poland, we visited three eyries and ringed three fully feathered young, which we also fitted with conventional radio transmitters. By the end of September, two of the young had become independent and had dispersed up to 25 km from the nest. The third, however, which we had also fitted with a small satellite transmitter (PTT) in order to study its departure and migration, was found dead on 26th September; its plucked remains were discovered beneath the nest, and, close by, the feathers, a pellet and excrement from an Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* strongly suggested that the latter had killed the young eagle. Seven breeding pairs of Eagle Owls are known within a radius of 3 km of the eyrie, the closest only 300 m away. We supposed that the eagle had been killed at the eyrie during the night. While it is well known that Eagle Owls may kill quite large raptors (Mikkola 1976, 1983), no instance of their killing a juvenile Spotted Eagle is given in the literature (e.g. Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* 1971; Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer 1980; Cramp & Simmons 1980; Piechocki 1985; Suchy 1986). Nevertheless, a seven-week-old White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* was killed in a Polish eyrie, probably by an Eagle Owl (Falandysz & Mizera 1989).

In spring 1992, we used a stuffed Eagle Owl as a decoy in an attempt to catch adult Spotted Eagles (a method used successfully for Lesser Spotted Eagles *A. pomarina*). Although the Spotted Eagles were almost immediately attracted, they were not aggressive enough to get caught, presumably indicating that they regarded Eagle Owls as potentially dangerous. In one instance, a Spotted Eagle, on coming close to the decoy, was heard calling in a way which resembled the distant neighing of a horse.

Bernd-U. Meyburg, Tadeusz Mizera, Grzegorz Maciorowski, Marek Dylawski and Arkadiusz Smyk

Wangenheimstrasse 32, D-14193 Berlin, Germany

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LETTER

The Norwegian Brown-headed Cowbird

The female Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater* at Jomfruland, Kragerø, Telemark, Norway, on 1st June 1987 was not just 'found dead' as stated by McKay (1994). The bird was alive and feeding with Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris* on the ground in the garden of the bird observatory. Subsequently, it was trapped and photographed (plates 102 & 103, which have never been published before), was found to be in a weak condition, and then died. The bird is now preserved at the Zoologisk Museum in Oslo, Norway. The record is accepted by the Norwegian Rarities Committee (Bentz 1989).

Jørn R. Gustad (Secretary of the Norwegian Rarities Committee)

Magnusgate 7, N-0650 Oslo, Norway

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McKAY, C. R. 1994. Brown-headed Cowbird in Strathclyde: new to Britain and Ireland. *Brit. Birds* 87: 284-288.



Plates 102 & 103. Female Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*, Norway, 1st June 1987. Left, with Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*. (Øyvind Olsen)



RARITIES COMMITTEE NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

ZEISS

The annual meeting of the British Birds Rarities Committee was held at Blunham on 1st April 1995.

Escapes

A matter of concern at every level, from potential additions to the British List to everyday submissions to county recorders, is the 'escape problem', to which there is no simple answer. It is clear, for example, that rare waders genuinely occur in strange places in southeast England while obvious exotic escapes appear in far-flung parts of the Southwest and the Northern Isles. There seems no logic in assuming, therefore, either that Nearctic wildfowl or Asiatic passerines in Cornwall or Shetland 'must be truly wild' or that similar species in the Home Counties 'must be escapes'.

As both wild Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris* in North America and Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula* in Britain come to be fed on bread, 'tame' behaviour of a potential vagrant mixed up with 'tame' wildfowl on a British lake may not be enough evidence to prove its origin one way or another, although extreme cases may create more than reasonable doubt.

The Committee believes that, although identifications may often be judged with ease, origins are frequently impossible to ascertain. With species that are known to have vagrancy potential but are also known to occur in captivity, we can only continue to look at reports and publish those of proven identity, without thereby implying that the individual birds concerned were necessarily wild in origin.



Plate 104. British Birds Rarities Committee, Blunham, April 1995 (*Erika Sharrock*). Left to right, Peter Clement, K. D. Shaw, Dr Colin Bradshaw, Reg Thorpe, R. A. Hume (Chairman), C. D. R. Heard and M. J. Rogers (Secretary). G. P. Catley, Pete Ellis, Andy Stoddart and Grahame Walbridge were unable to attend.

Contentious records

The Committee sometimes hears of comments on published accepted records such as 'Surely everyone knows that wasn't right?'. This is not particularly helpful and we need either to hear such doubts before a record is published or to receive a proper explanation in writing afterwards. We do not want to encourage criticism of observers by others, but a polite, reasoned and objective letter to the Secretary will ensure that the Committee takes all the evidence into account and will help to avoid mistakes. We wish to encourage greater openness and positive contributions to debatable reports.

Unsubmitted records

We also repeat our desire to maintain as complete a record as possible. If you saw a rare bird which has not yet been included in an annual 'Report on rare birds', or which you know has not been submitted by the finder, please help to 'plug the gap' by sending in a description. The Committee has discussed the possibility of highlighting the finder's name in the annual report, but this presents too many difficulties. We much prefer to have a report by an observer not involved in the finding or identification of a bird than to have no report at all, and those sending in such reports need have no fear of being accused of 'poaching'. In particular, we should like to thank D. J. Holman for sending in copies of his field descriptions of a number of birds each year which would otherwise fail to appear anywhere. We acknowledge, however, that neither Dave Holman nor others who do the same wish to be thought of as trying to take credit for 'other people's birds'.

'Eastern' Common Redstarts

Following an extensive review of the literature and examination of skins by Dr Alan Knox, the Rarities Committee has decided that, owing to the degree of overlap, it is unsafe to separate in the field females of all ages and first-year males of Common Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* of the race *samamisisicus* from similar birds of the nominate race. Adult males of the race *samamisisicus* differ from the nominate by showing pure white (not just pale) edges to the primaries, secondaries and sometimes tertials. Individuals showing pale edges may belong to either race, whilst those showing pale tips as well as edges are likely to be aberrant individuals of the nominate race. This differentiation requires excellent views and should preferably be supported by good-quality photographs (see *Brit. Birds* 86: 378-386 for justification). Because of these strict criteria, the majority of records submitted as showing characteristics of this race have been rejected and several previously accepted records are now being reconsidered.

South Coast Gull-billed Terns

The Committee has been asked to re-examine the remarkable series of records of Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica* from Sussex in the early and mid 1960s. The Committee felt that it would be more logical to examine the pattern of records along the whole English south coast at that time, and has found it difficult to reach any decision. Few if any of the records would be acceptable by today's standards (but that is true for many other perfectly good records of several other

species for that era) and we feel that the records should either stand or fall together. We shall welcome comments, especially from those involved in birding at the time and from those with knowledge of the changing status of the Gull-billed Tern in Northern Europe in the last 40 years. Please write to M. J. Rogers, Secretary BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ.

New member

With effect from 1st May 1995, Graham Catley resigned from the BBRC owing to pressure of other commitments.

We are pleased to announce that a candidate already independently nominated for the post which would normally have become vacant on 1st April 1996, Doug Page of Doncaster, has been co-opted as a replacement for Graham with immediate effect.

We are sorry to lose Graham, whose contribution to the Committee has been excellent and unstinting. We wish him well in his alternative endeavours and have no doubt that his expertise concerning rarities matters will still be called upon from time to time.

Doug Page had been on the Committee's own 'short list' of potential members before his nomination. We are delighted to have such a capable ready-made replacement to call upon. Graham Catley's resignation will obviate the need for the usual retirement of the longest-serving member. Doug Page will stand for formal election to the Committee at the beginning of 1996 and nominations for alternative candidates should be submitted before 31st December 1995 to me at the address below.

Newly accepted first records

Two records, both of which predate the previously accepted first records on the British & Irish List and both already accepted by the Rarities Committee, have now also been accepted by the BOU Records Committee:

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, Marazion, Cornwall, 7th-8th June 1970.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* of race *kumlieni*, colloquially known as 'Kumlien's Gull', Penzance, Cornwall, 3rd-15th March 1979.

The BOURC has also notified the acceptance of the following specimen record from Northern Ireland, which predates the previously accepted first record on the British & Irish List:

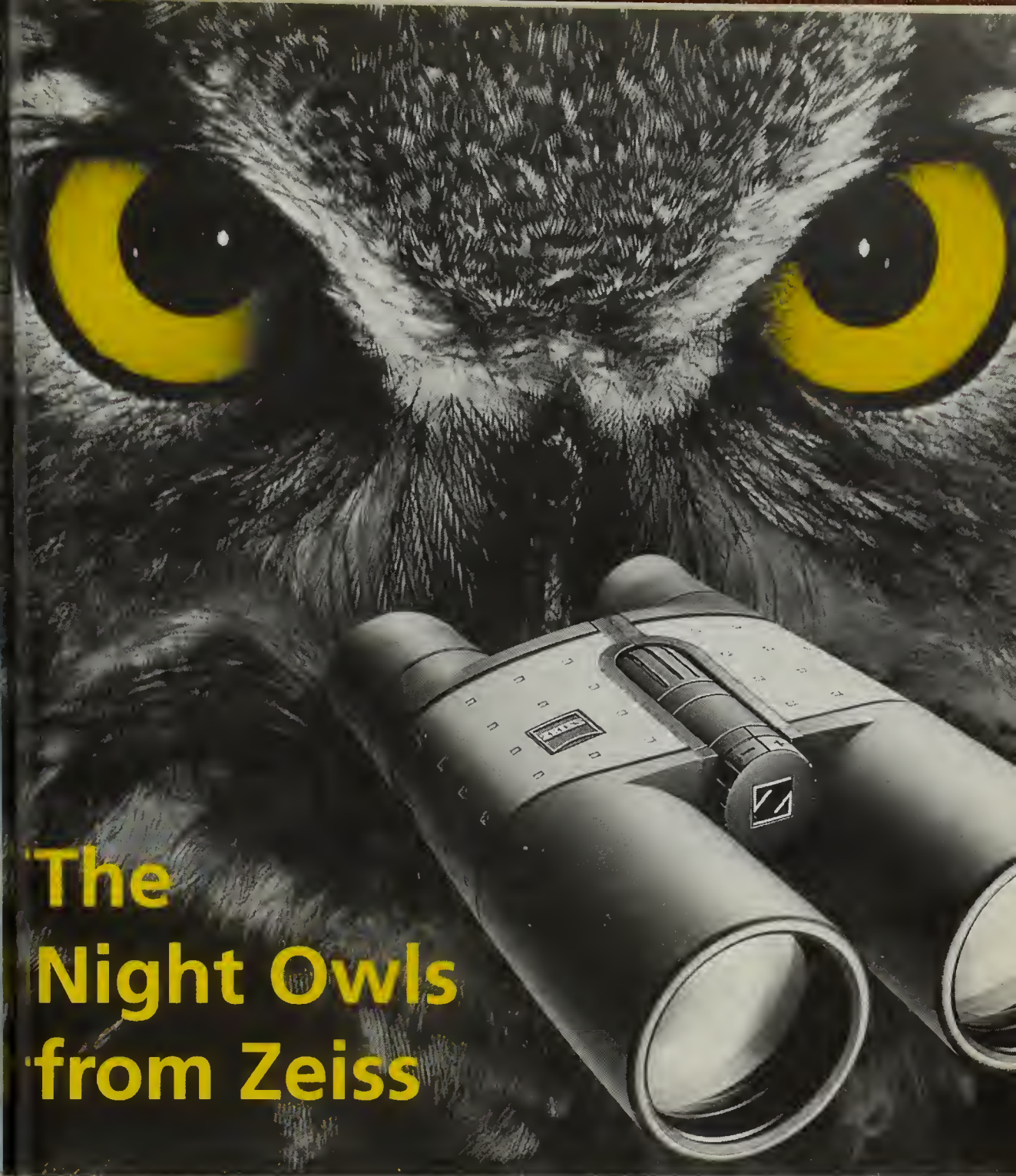
Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*, St John's Point, Co. Down, 30th October 1913.

R. A. Hume

15 Cedar Gardens, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1EY



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Tree Swallow in Scilly: new to the Western Palearctic

Jeremy Hickman

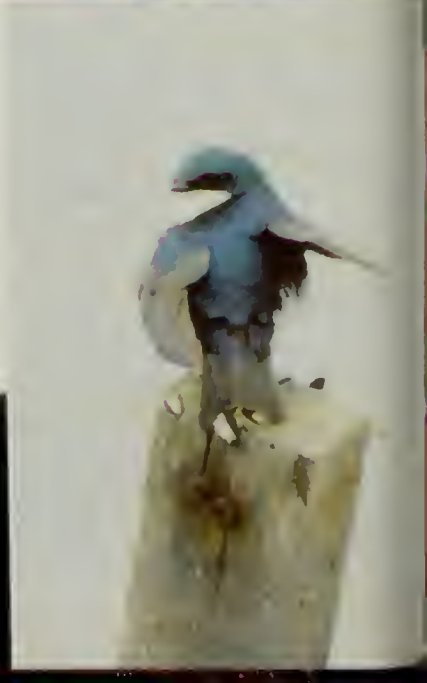
The Isles of Scilly is renowned as a haven for displaced migrant birds, and the autumn pilgrimage of observers in September and October is famous in ornithological circles. June is usually a quiet month for numbers of visiting birdwatchers, as are the other months outside the autumn, but June 1990 was the exception. In one five-day period, between 800 and 1,000 people came to see one bird: the first record for Britain & Ireland, Europe and the Western Palearctic of a North American species, Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*.

On Wednesday 6th June 1990, having finished my shift behind the bar in the Mermaid Inn, I decided to go to Porth Hellick. I watched from the main hide for a while and could hardly believe how devoid of bird life it was. I could not even console myself by counting the Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus*.

At about 19.00 BST, five hirundines approached low over the pool: one House Martin *Delichon urbica*, three Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and another bird. This fifth bird gave the impression of a martin, but with no white rump and a glossy blue-green mantle and crown, and pure white underparts. My heart sank as the bird then flew to the back of the pool and began hawking around the pines and surrounding fields. I rushed to Sluice to obtain closer views and to note its plumage in detail.

It appeared slightly bigger and bulkier in the body than a House Martin, with broader-based wings and more powerful flight. Its underparts were all pure snowy white, from its chin to its undertail-coverts, with only a very tiny extension of white from the flanks to the upperside of the body at the base of the wing. Its upperparts were the most amazing bright, glossy blue-green. The wings and tail were matt-black, and the underwing and undertail off-white to silvery grey. The colour of the crown extended well below the level of the eye and squared off into the ear-coverts. The shape of the tail was similar to that of House Martin, being short, but less forked when closed.

The next few minutes were total panic. Would it go? Would it stay? What was



it? I was not calm! As it was June, there was no-one anywhere. At about 20.00 BST, I ran back to my car and drove to Old Town to phone the other resident birders on St Mary's (all two of them). At this stage, I was still unsure of exactly what I had found. I was not expecting to see American birds in June, and I had no knowledge of any eastern species of this nature.

I phoned Carl Downing and Adrian Hickman to discuss the possibilities. CD and AH explained that Violet-green Swallow *T. thalassina* had large white sides to the rump and a bare facial expression, with the only green gloss being on the cap, and white cheeks. It was also unlikely as a vagrant, being found in the Western States of North America. It was, however, the week of the Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus* on Lundy, Devon, so anything was possible. Bahama Swallow *T. cyaneoviridis*, another unlikely vagrant, is much more like a Barn Swallow, with a deeply forked tail, so was easily eliminated. CD and AH, using *A Handbook to the Swallows and Martins of the World* (Turner & Rose 1989), were able to help me to rule out species originating in the East as well, and to identify the bird that I had found as a North American Tree Swallow.

On driving back to Porth Hellick, my panic had turned into elation. I re-entered the hide like a polaris missile to find, to my embarrassment, three visitors quietly and patiently birdwatching. They enquired as to my disposition and I told them of my earlier sighting. Luckily the bird was still present, but was in amongst a larger group of hirundines. We watched it until dusk, confident that it would be around the following day. Thankfully, it did stay in the Porth Hellick area until the morning of 10th June 1990, when it departed with the same group of hirundines with which it had arrived. A photograph by Jack Levene has already been published in *British Birds* (84: plate 266).

Description

The following details were compiled during several days of observations, and include points noted by C. D. R. Heard, P. G. Lansdown, K. E. Vinicombe and W. Wagstaff.

SIZE AND STRUCTURE Obviously a hirundine. Slightly larger than House Martin. Bulkier in the body, with broader-based wings and bulging secondaries. Short tail like that of House Martin, less forked than House Martin's when closed.

HEAD Forehead, crown and nape all iridescent blue-green/bottle-green, the colour extending below eye level and squared off into the ear-coverts. The colour of the crown was possibly lighter and greener than the general upperpart coloration, with a thick black eye-stripe bulging downwards behind eye.

UPPERPARTS Because of the nature of the iridescent plumage, it is difficult adequately or correctly to state the colour, as it varied in

different shades of sunlight. It has been variously described, but metallic blue with a slight green tint is, to my mind, the most accurate. Whitish bases to the shafts of the first two visible primaries gave a 'slatted' effect to the wings in flight. Tail matt black above and silver-grey below.

UNDERPARTS Pure snow-white from chin to undertail-coverts. Underwing and undertail off-white to silver-grey. Axillaries and underwing-coverts dusky. Submarginal coverts with dirty white tips.

BARE PARTS Legs and feet grey. Rather long-legged, with the tarsus clearly visible at rest; also, large feet with long claws. Rather liquid-looking, black eyes.

Plates 105-110. Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*, St Mary's, Scilly, June 1990. (Top three, Robin Chittenden; fourth, Martin P. Goodey; bottom left, Robin Chittenden; bottom right, Jack Levene)

Behaviour

Flight possibly less dashing than that of Barn Swallow, with several quick loose flaps followed by a glide on upswept wings. Quite often appeared to stall in mid-air, hunching its body, looking downwards and fanning its tail. Tended to perch on rocks and posts, where it was heard to sing. This presumably means that it was a male. The song was a soft, liquid chirping with some notes recalling Barn Swallow. The call was a soft 't-reep'.

Origin

Tree Swallow had been regarded by Chandler S. Robbins as a candidate for transatlantic vagrancy (*Brit. Birds* 73: 448-457), but I doubt if this one crossed the Atlantic in June. From its association with northward-moving European hirundines, it seems more credible that it crossed the Atlantic in the previous autumn and had already wintered in Europe or Africa.

Acknowledgments

I should like to thank C. R. Downing and A. E. D. Hickman for their help on identification, and special thanks to Bernard D. Bond for all the beer.

D. J. D. Hickman, 46 Adelaide Street, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 2ER

EDITORIAL COMMENT Rob Hume, Chairman of the British Birds Rarities Committee, and Dr David Parkin, Chairman of the BOU Records Committee, have commented that 'Acceptance of the identification was straightforward. Members of the BBRC looked at skins at The Natural History Museum. The upperparts of most are strongly iridescent, but others are quite dull. A few are predominantly green, but some are strongly purple-hued. The bright plumage and song suggest that the bird was an adult male.

'This is an abundant species along the Atlantic coast of North America that occurs in variable numbers on offshore islands such as Bermuda and Sable Island. It is not a long-distance migrant, but is unknown in trade so that its escape risk is virtually nil. The record was accepted, and the species admitted to Category A of the British List.

'It is not possible to decide whether the bird was newly arrived in Europe, or whether it had arrived the previous autumn and overwintered. It is even possible that it crossed the Atlantic farther south, perhaps to West Africa, and moved north with returning Palearctic hirundines.

'An earlier record of this species, from Derbyshire in 1850, was also considered by the BOURC. The details of its shooting are rather vague. It passed through several pairs of hands, and even the original recorder, John Wolley, admitted that there was "quite a possibility of mistake". It seemed safer not to admit this record (see *Brit. Birds* 86: 188).'



The inclusion of plates 105-110 in colour has been subsidised by *Carl Zeiss Ltd*, sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

DNA and captive registrations

Most readers will have noticed the increasing use of DNA tests in court cases involving captive birds of prey. Earlier this year, such evidence resulted in a custodial sentence on one 'bird-breeder'. It was during 1993 that this technique became well known and it has since become a more regular monitoring tool. We therefore ask the question: Has the reduction in new registrations of Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* and Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis* in 1994 anything to do with these tests? Registrations reported in *Hansard* have been as follows:

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Peregrine	269	319	290	360	289
Goshawk	79	155	141	154	116

At much the same time as this information became known, the Environment Minister, Sir Paul Beresford, announced that the Government was providing funding to extend and promote the use of DNA testing to improve the protection of threatened species. A total of £40,000 has been allocated to finance selective tests that will be commissioned by the Department's Wildlife Inspectorate. All very welcome news.

Egg-thieves caught in Britain fined in Germany

Dieter & Jurgen Kremer, two German nationals, have recently appeared before a German court charged with attempting to steal Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* eggs in Scotland. This is probably the first time that foreign nationals have been prosecuted in their own country for offences committed against wild birds in the UK. The case was brought before a Mannheim Court under German wildlife legislation which allows German nationals to be tried in Germany for offences committed overseas, if there is an equivalent offence under German law.

The case dates back to 1989, when Jurgen

Kremer was observed climbing on a cliff near a Peregrine site in Scotland. The police investigated, and a search of the Kremers' car revealed several items suggesting that they were involved with falconry and the illegal taking of Peregrine eggs. They were charged in Scotland, released on bail, but failed to appear to answer the charges. The result of the subsequent German court action, some five years later, was that both were convicted, their equipment confiscated, each sentenced to nine months' probation and each fined £8,100, to be paid to a conservation organisation and spent on Peregrine conservation.

Crofting and the RSPB

Three years ago, in a unique exercise, the Scottish Crofters Union and the RSPB launched a joint document, *Crofting and the Environment*. At that time, many people considered the two organisations to be rather strange bed-fellows, but the co-operation demonstrated the importance of collaboration to achieve a sustainable and desirable environment for both wildlife and those who work the land.

Further co-operation has resulted in a second document, *Rural Development and the Environment—opportunities in the Highlands*

and Islands. This document is a clarion call to a range of bodies including the Scottish Office, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, the Forestry Commission and the Scottish Tourist Board. They would do well to note two points (at least). The Highlands & Islands has some of Europe's greatest environmental assets, and the SCU and the RSPB do not pretend to have all the answers—they are just highlighting some of the steps that need to be taken. Further information is available from the SCU, The Old Mill, Broadford, Isle of Skye IV49 9AQ (tel: 01471-822529).

Since the War ended

Worldwide celebrations in 1995 have marked 50 years since the end of the Second World War. Those 50 years have seen some dramatic changes to the bird populations of Britain. Many species have undergone serious declines, particularly on farmland, where in 50 years there have been massive changes, with mechanisation, use of chemicals and the arrival of intensive cultivation techniques. Amongst the declining species are Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Corn Crake *Crex crex* and Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*. Only one species, however, has been totally lost in the past 50 years, the Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, although one or two others (e.g. Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*) have come pretty close.

There has been a considerable gain in the number of breeding species since the end of the War. Twenty-three species have been added to the list of regular breeders. VE Day parties would not have heard Collared Doves

Sireptopelia decaocto calling from the roof-tops; Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* had still to invade southeast England; and Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* and Rose-ringed Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* had still to escape or be released from captivity. Some of the pre-War losses have now returned: the well-known Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* and Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* stories, together with three wetland species, Ruff *Phlomachus pugnax*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* and Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*. Several sporadic breeders have now become annual, including Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, and Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*.

Let us hope that we can do something to halt or reverse the recent dramatic declines and, over the next 50 years, welcome a further 20 or more species to our national list of breeding birds.

Diana Blamire wins award

For many years, Diana undertook the onerous task of compiling the annual indexes for *BB*. She also worked tirelessly for more than a decade as the RSPB Belfast Members' Group leader, and, although she has now relinquished that post, she continues to work for the Group and the RSPB in Northern Ireland. Her achievements are too numerous to list in full, but she has edited two birdwatching guides to Northern Ireland (produced to raise money for the RSPB), acted as secretary and joint compiler of the NI Bird Report, organised the sale of Christmas goods for the RSPB and even persuaded a theatre company to put on a

play for the RSPB. In recognition of her many achievements, Diana has now been presented with the prestigious Sydney Stewart Memorial Trust Award, given for outstanding voluntary service in any field.

We are all delighted that her unstinting efforts and enthusiasm have been duly rewarded. Diana will shortly be leaving her adopted home in Belfast and returning to England. We wish her well, but her drive and commitment will be sorely missed. All we can be sure of is that her next place of residence will be the beneficiary. (Contributed by Dave Allen)

Further protection for the Essex coast

Every winter, there are, on average, over 60,000 waterfowl using the Blackwater Estuary, Essex. Amongst these are some 5% of the World's dark-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla bernicla* (nearly 9,000), 10% of the British Grey Plovers *Phivalis squatarola* (over 2,000), 4% of the British Dunlins *Calidris alpina* (nearly 18,000) and 16% of the British Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* (over 750). A pretty important place, and one could be tempted to ask why it has taken the

Government so long to notify the site as a Special Protection Area under the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds. On 12th May, the formal announcement from the Government confirmed the designation, covering a total of 3,000 ha of intertidal mud-flats, saltmarshes and grazing marsh. We must welcome this addition to the list of SPAs in the United Kingdom, but it would be great if designation of those in the pipe-line could be speeded up a little.

Proposed Special Areas of Conservation in Scotland

Three sites in Shetland are among 15 selected around Scotland as the first potential off-shore Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) which would be protected by law under the EU Habitats Directive, better known as Natura 2000. The marine sites—the waters around the island of Mousa which it is hoped will become a haven for Common Seals *Phoca vitulina*, the reefs and caves around Papa Stour, and the coastal lagoons of The Vadills on the west side—are among 108 Scottish wildlife sites proposed for designation as of international importance, several of them already protected as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. But what is special is that this is the first time that conservation bodies have ventured off the land in a bid to preserve important natural habitats.

Cirl Bunting Bulletin

Although it has been doing a little better in recent years, and has now broken the 300-breeding-pairs barrier, the Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirius* is still one of Britain's rarest breeding species and shows little inclination to spread from its south Devon stronghold (or retreat). Four organisations have now joined forces to try to give the population another boost. The RSPB, the Countryside Commission, the Devon Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group and the South Hams Environment Service have formed a partnership to produce the *Cirl Bunting Bulletin*. This provides advice to landowners and land-managers on how they can help Cirl Buntings and other farmland bird species, and indicates what grants are available to offset the costs of such work. Copies of the *Bulletin* may be obtained from the RSPB, 10 Richmond Road, Exeter, Devon EX4 4JA (tel: 01392 432691).

BOU and JNCC tackle feral and introduced birds

Peterborough in April was the venue for a combined British Ornithologists' Union and Joint Nature Conservation Committee conference on the subject of feral and introduced birds. A fascinating array of presentations ranged from the expected Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* and Golden Pheasants *Chrysolophus pictus* in the UK to translocation in New Zealand and a general debate on re-introduction as a conservation tool. The final discussion on what, if anything, should be done about introduced or feral birds in the UK generated some lively debate, if somewhat lacking in realism. Quite clearly, individual views varied greatly, which tended to lead one to the conclusion that, while man debates, the species will sort themselves out. The world at large just might not accept decisions on culling or not culling from learned groups of ornithologists.

All sorts of fascinating snippets came to light during the three days. The Ruddy Duck is now breeding in Iceland; the British population of the Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* is almost certain to double by the end of the century (i.e. within five years); 2,000 Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* were released at a site capable of holding only 200-300 wildfowl in total; and will the Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* take off at a rate of expansion equal to that achieved by the Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*?

The highlight of the weekend was retiring-President Dr Janet Kear's presentation of the Alfred Newton Memorial Lecture. Ranging from saints and virgins to woodpeckers and geese, Janet propounded a link between woodpeckers and hole-nesting ducks and asked 'Why are there no woodpeckers in Australia and Ireland?'

'The Bird Table'

If you participate in the BTO's Garden BirdWatch, you will know all about this new magazine/newsletter. Scheduled to be published four times a year, *The Bird Table* will be sent to all participants in Garden BirdWatch. Crammed full of information for the armchair birder, and those who at times like to be armchair birders (we take part in the scheme over breakfast each morning), Garden BirdWatch is a mass-participation enquiry run by the BTO with sponsorship from *Cf WildBird Foods*. New recruits are always welcome; it is fun, easy to do and quite an eye-opener about

your garden. Trials in 1994 indicated that 69% of gardens now record Siskins *Carduelis spinus*, compared with less than 10% only 20 years ago, and, less surprisingly, the Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* is still the most frequently recorded species in gardens. More than 3,000 people are participating and you can join the scheme by sending £10 to the BTO, The National Centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU. Participants will receive a set of recording forms, four magazines annually and vouchers towards the purchase of bird food.

Merlins adapt to the forest

Two studies, funded by the Forestry Commission—one in Kielder Forest by the Northumberland Ringing Group and the other in Wales by the RSPB—have looked at the relationship between Merlins *Falco columbarius* and forests and how the Merlin has changed its breeding ecology in response to afforestation. Tree-nesting Merlins achieve a greater fledging success than ground-nesting pairs, presumably as a result of greater security from ground predators.

The latest research information, *Merlins and Forestry* by Steve Petty, is available free of charge from the Forestry Commission Research Division, Alice Holt Lodge, Wrecclesham, Farnham, Surrey GU10 4LH.

FC grant funding to increase by 30 per cent

Annual grant payments for the creation and management of woodlands are set to increase by more than £10 million over the next three years, according to figures recently published by the Forestry Commission. The Commission's expenditure plans for this period indicate a total allocation of almost £44 million for 1997/98 in grants to private owners—an increase of over 30% on the 1994/95 total. This increase will also help to fund the creation of new woodlands in priority areas such as the Community Forests and Sherwood Forest in England, Central Scotland Woodlands, and Aman Gwendraeth in Wales.

New societies in Russia

Fledgling ornithological societies are being formed in the new Russia. In February 1993, 73 professional and amateur ornithologists came together in the Zoological Museum of Moscow State University to found the first ornithological organisation to cover the whole of Russia. The resulting Soyuz Okhrany Ptits Rossii (or Russian Union for the Protection of Birds) elected Prof. V. E. Flint and Prof. V. M. Galyshin, names well known to readers of *BIWP* and Russian field guides, as President and Vice-president, respectively. There is no membership subscription (but donations will not be refused!). Some 4,800 km to the east, another society has been formed: the Baikal Union for the Protection of Birds, with the objective of protecting birds and their habitats on and around Lake Baikal. It is hoped that this will become one of the Russian Union's branches.

Meanwhile, the Moscow branch of the

Menzbir Ornithological Society (an organisation that arose following the political changes in Russia) elevated itself to the position of Moscow Ornithological Society. The Menzbir OS had sought to register itself officially, but this had not been accomplished and thus, under Russian law, it had no legal existence. The precautionary approach was to try to register the Moscow OS as an alternative, in the hope that one or the other would receive official recognition. In the end, both societies managed to gain official registration. The Moscow OS has now set itself the tasks of studying and protecting the birds and their habitats in the Moscow region, including the completion of an atlas of Moscow's breeding birds.

Let us hope that the new Russian ornithological scene results in co-operative use of the limited resources available to the different organisations. We wish them well! (*Information supplied by Geoff Harper*)

German rarities courtesy of 'Zeiss'

The latest issue of *Limicola* (vol. 9, no. 2, April 1995) includes the sixth report of the German Rarities Committee, covering 1993, with 654 accepted records of 110 species. The work of the German committee is supported by *Zeiss*, which also sponsors the British Birds Rarities Committee. The 33-page report includes a summary in English. The one species added to the German list in 1993 was Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*, but there were also several 'seconds'.

The issue also includes a 23-page paper on the identification of Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* by Hannu Jännes, with its vital table 2, summarising differences between Arctic Redpoll and 'Mealy' Common Redpoll *C. flammea flammea*, in English as well as German.

The address of *Limicola*, edited by Peter H. Barthel, is: Über dem Salzgraben 11, OT Drüber, D-37574 Einbeck, Germany.

Counting Black Storks at Gibraltar

Volunteers are needed to count Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* passing over Gibraltar in autumn 1995 (and future years). Over 900 were seen in 1993 and again in 1994, the largest flock being of 130 on 30th September 1994. Many other migrants, including the spectacle of many species of birds of prey in large numbers, will also be seen.

Write or telephone to Maria Cristina Parkes (who is bilingual), Finca El Bornizo, Pelayo 11390, Algeciras (Cadiz), Spain; phone: 00-34-56-685162; fax: 00-34-56-685162.

Whither the Slender-billed Curlew's breeding grounds?

Depressingly small numbers of Slender-billed Curlews *Numenius tenuirostris* are seen each year on this species' Mediterranean wintering grounds, but, so long as even a few are seen, the hope must remain that it does still nest. But where?

Until recently, the consensus of opinion was that it may breed in the forest zone of west Siberia. Then a Russian ornithologist, Viktor Belik, suggested looking instead in a totally different habitat: sandy areas in the steppe. His reasons form an article, translated from the Russian, that appears in the *Wader Study Group Bulletin* (75: 37-38).

New Reception Hide for Blacktoft Sands

The first stop for visitors to Blacktoft Sands, the RSPB's major Humberside nature reserve, was formerly a glorified garden shed. On the last day of March, all that changed, when Mrs Ann Prestt, widow of the RSPB's previous Director General and later President, Ian Prestt, in whose memory it was named, performed the opening ceremony at the new purpose-built Reception Hide. The spacious new building which will now greet visitors incorporates displays relating to the reserve, an information point and a souvenir sales area. There are also spectacular views over the reserve's reedbed and lagoons.

Construction of the new building was made possible by a generous donation from Humberside County Council.

Thumbs down to Black Woodpecker

The BOU Records Committee has reassessed more than 110 claimed reports of Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* and has concluded, in its twenty-second report, that there is no evidence that the species has occurred in a wild state in Britain & Ireland for over 200 years.

Gannets from the air

Imagine counting 60,428 white spots on a series of photographs. That is just what Sarah Wanless and Stuart Murray did as part of the 1994-95 World Survey of Northern Gannets *Morus bassanus*. They were counting the World's largest colony on St Kilda, and counting them took much longer than photographing them.

In Russia at least, his ideas are being taken seriously. As reported in the latest bulletin of the Russians' Wader Working Group (no. 8, Moscow 1995), the Russian Bird Conservation Union has set up an 'initiative group' to co-ordinate the international search effort. Consisting of one Kazakh and three Russian ornithologists, including Belik, one of the group's immediate tasks is to investigate his theory. Given the vast size of the territories they have to monitor, it will be a mammoth task, and one can only hope that they have the resources to do something useful before it is too late. (Contributed by Geoff Harper)

New photographic magazine

The Wildlife Photographer, 'a magazine for wildlife photographers worldwide', has just been launched. The Editor is Mike Wilkes, who won our Bird Photograph of the Year competition in 1977 (*Brit. Birds* 70: 133-136), and his Assistant Editor is Mike Lane, this year's BPY winner (*Brit. Birds* 88: 326-331). There is an eye-catching Lion *Panthera leo* on the front cover of Issue Number One, which includes features on wildlife photography in Kenya, in the Sultanate of Oman (by BPY 'superpair' Hanne & Jens Eriksen), and in Extremadura; on photographing birds without the use of telephoto; and on underwater photography.

The cover price of the first issue is £2.50. For subscription details, write to PO Box 1, Studley, Warwickshire B80 7JG, or telephone 01427-852357.

Grant for Tanzanian Bird Project

A study of important bird areas in Tanzania by the RSPB has been given funding under the Government's Darwin Initiative.

The project aims to identify all the best areas for birds in Tanzania and publish a directory of these to help focus conservation efforts on the areas of greatest importance. The project will be undertaken by RSPB staff with Tanzanian conservationists working alongside to gain experience.

The Government's £84,000 to fund this two-year project is made possible as it relates directly to the Biodiversity Convention. The Darwin Initiative was announced at the Earth Summit in Rio in order to support the aims of the Biodiversity Convention, using Britain's strengths in biodiversity conservation in co-operative projects to assist developing countries.

Warm winters help Dartford Warblers

The Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* has increased in numbers dramatically thanks to mild winters and better heathland protection. The results of a joint RSPB/English Nature census of Dartford Warblers in Britain show that there has been a fourfold increase in population over the last decade, with 1,600-1,670 breeding territories in southern England. With the increase has come a spread into many counties from which they had vanished.

Berkshire, Cornwall and Devon have been re-colonised, and the species has bred in Somerset for the first time. It now also breeds in East and West Sussex, the Isle of Wight and Surrey, but the strongholds remain in Dorset, with 650 pairs, and Hampshire, with about 600 pairs. How long, one wonders, before they return as far north as Shropshire, where they apparently bred occasionally in the 1800s?

East European publications

How often has it been said that the number of journals and magazines devoted to birds and birdwatching has grown to the extent that it is now difficult—no, probably impossible—to keep up with them all? The political changes within Europe in recent years have produced a further crop of journals and magazines available to the British reader. Historically, access to them was difficult, and the language problem made them a very specialist group of publications. Now, they are certainly available, and, although the paper quality is far from what we have come to expect, and the layout and design work may appear somewhat out of date to our Western eyes, every contribution is accompanied by an English-language summary. We recently mentioned *Neophron* from Bulgaria, but two others have just come to our attention.

First, *Modern Ornithology* 1992, published by the Menzbir Ornithological Society (formerly the USSR Ornithological Society), 1st Kotelnicheskyy per., 10, RU-Moscow

109240, Russia, with financial support from the University of Kansas. Flicking through the contents of some 36 separate contributions, there are articles on the speed of flight of Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* (measured at 61.4 km/hour in calm weather); the breeding birds of the Mongolian Gobi (the result of ten years' fieldwork and reviewing 63 species); and large-scale vagrancy of Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* in the Voronezh region (flocks of up to 150 in 1957, 1960 and 1979).

The second publication is *Berkut* ('Golden Eagle'), vol. 3, no. 1, 1994, published by the Ornithologists Union of Ukraine, Kanev Nature Reserve, 258300, Kanev, Ukraine. Contributions are as varied as breeding biology of Little Crake *Porzana parva*, Ukrainian folk names of birds, first record of wintering Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* in the Bukovina and the rather surprising nesting of Common Gull *L. canis* in the west of the country.

New National Nature Reserve with a difference

Is your image of a National Nature Reserve an area of remote moorland or thriving broad-leaved woodland in the heart of tranquil countryside? Not so England's 161st NNR, where the opening ceremony took place at the end of March in Hartlepool power station to mark the establishment of Teesmouth NNR. Surrounded today by shipping, engineering, power generation, oil-processing and chemical-processing, human activity has been intense here since the Middle Ages when sea-salt production began.

Yet wildlife still thrives within the 340 ha of mudflats, saltmarsh and dunes, which hold in-

ternationally important numbers of Red Knot *Calidris canutus* and Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*, while Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Common Teal *Anas crecca*, Sanderling *Calidris alba*, Great Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* and Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* all regularly exceed nationally important qualifying levels. In addition, it supports rare plants and insects, and a population of Grey *Halichoerus grypus* and Common Seals *Phoca vitulina* with, in 1989, the first Common Seal pup born here for 150 years—not inappropriate, since the new reserve includes the area of Seal Sands SSSI.

Ecological progress in Ukraine

Against all the odds, it seems, and certainly economic ones, the Ukraine is aiming to improve the ecological situation in this newly formed sovereign state, one that suffered badly as a result of the Chernobyl disaster. New legislation is being drafted using experience gained by other countries, new reserves are being created in a variety of habitats, and several Red Lists are being compiled following the publication of the First Red Book of Ukraine in 1976. In 1992, on the basis of international experience, Ukraine prepared its first national ecological report, which was followed a year later by a fuller report. The task is enormous, but the will to succeed seems strong.

And how does Chernobyl fit into all this? Latest news is that the authorities plan to close down the nuclear power plant by the year 2000—hopefully less dramatically than its last intrusion on the World.

Rubber ducks?

With villages and the resorts of Withernsea and Hornsea on the Holderness coast in Humberside in danger of slowly drowning, residents are hoping that a plan to dump millions of tyres in the sea to form a protective reef will be sanctioned by Government. This part of the coast has long suffered from erosion, and Spurn Head, the spit of land that is home to the well-known Spurn Bird Observatory, has been washed away and reformed six times in recorded history. The new plan would involve submerging a bank of 1.5 million compressed tyres bound with nylon and concrete into a tangle of ropes. Placed 1,000 m offshore, it would have to be tested for stability, effects on local currents and pollution, but, if successful, the scheme could place more than a billion tyres in seven 2-km-long strips all the way up the coast. It is, however, not a quick solution, but a long-term project.

New Visitor Centre at Hermaness NNR

This exciting new Centre, situated a short walk from the entrance to Hermaness National Nature Reserve (the most northerly in Britain) at the northern tip of Unst in Shetland, was developed by Scottish Natural Heritage, and opened by Bill Oddie on 24th May. Situated in the old Muckle Flugga Shore Station that once housed families of the Flugga lightkeepers, it comprises an innovative three-dimensional display with several interactive elements. Interpretive panels, set into a stylised cliff face, focus mainly on seabirds, but also present information on the globally threatened blanket bog and highly productive adjacent seas. A smaller room houses the 'Warden's Study', an area where visitors are free to browse through

literature relating to the Reserve, consult library books, or simply shelter from the elements.

The Reserve itself is internationally renowned for its large seabird populations, hosting the World's third-largest colony of Great Skuas *Stercorarius skua*, and Britain's sixth-biggest colony of Northern Gannets *Morus bassanus*. There are also over 50,000 Puffins *Fratercula arctica*, probably the most approachable in Shetland (more-inquisitive ones will even nibble the bootlaces of their human admirers).

Further information on the Reserve and the Visitor Centre is available from SNH's Lerwick office on 01595-693345.

Recent breeding by Banded Stilts

The Banded Stilt *Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*, a species endemic to Australia, has a breeding pattern which is unique for a wader: it breeds colonially, at densities of up to four to five nests per square metre. It is also notable for being the only wader whose chicks have an all-white downy plumage, and whose chicks form crèches shortly after hatching. The species breeds opportunistically on islands in remote inland salt lakes which fill only occasionally following heavy rains. Because of their remoteness, few Banded Stilt nesting colonies have been found, most of these well after the breeding attempt. As a result, much remains to be discovered regarding their breeding biology.

In mid February 1995, cyclone 'Bobby' dumped enough rain to fill many of the salt lakes in Western Australia, and almost immediately Banded Stilts disappeared from their

usual coastal non-breeding sites. Suspecting that a breeding attempt might be in the offing, CALM (Western Australia's Department of Conservation and Land Management) carried out an aerial survey in early March of lakes near Kalgoorlie, where previous breeding attempts had occurred. Several colonies were located, including at least one active one on Lake Ballard, which held about 2,000 pairs on 12th March, rising to an estimated 13,000 pairs by 9th April.

This colony, having been located quite early in the breeding cycle, is being studied intensively and has also been filmed by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Natural History Unit; we look forward to seeing the results of their efforts on UK television in due course. (RJC)

One good tern . . .

The RSPB has finally secured a lease over a man-made island in Larne Lough, Co. Antrim, some 17 years after the project was first initiated. The island was constructed by *Blue Circle Industries* to use as a repository for dredgings, and in so doing they created an island suitable for nesting terns *Sterna*. The project has been beset with problems. The island sank into the soft clays, but, after a lengthy battle with the contractors, it was finally stabilised. Whilst undertaking regular counts on the adjacent Swan Island, RSPB staff have monitored the new island's progress. Vegetation is now well established and breeding birds include Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, Red-breasted Mergansers *Mergus serrator* and Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*. It is planned to place a number of tern nest-boxes on the site this spring and it is hoped that the terns will follow, possibly even the Roseate Tern *S. dougalli*, whose only Northern Ireland colony is on Swan Island. (Contributed by Dave Allen)

Chris Mead retires

Or does he? We learn that, after completing one-third of a century as a full-time BTO employee, Chris has recently retired. *But* he is continuing as consultant Press officer for the BTO for two days per week, will be going in to his office at the Nunnery for half a day per week, and will increasingly be writing independently on birds, natural history and environmental issues. Some retirement! We wish him good luck in his 'new' roles.

Nest records wanted

The BTO's Nest Records Unit has made a special appeal for records of 14 species, the annual intake of cards for which has fallen so low that the reduced numbers are insufficient to monitor satisfactorily the species' population status. The 14 species concerned are: Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*, European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Blackcap *S. atricapilla*, Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, Chiffchaff *P. collybita*, Common Raven *Corvus corax*, Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, Reed Bunting *E. schoenichus*, and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*. For further details write to: BTO, National Centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

Say 'Hello' at Rutland

The British Birdwatching Fair is at Rutland Water from Friday 18th to Sunday 20th August. The BB stand is no. M2/31 (no. 31 in marquee no. 2). We'll welcome a visit from you.

Clean out nest-boxes now

The advice from the Nest Records Unit of the BTO is that all nest-boxes should be cleaned out as soon as practicable after the young have fledged, and that this chore should not be left until October or November (which is probably when most people get around to doing it). Early cleaning will help to reduce transference of and over-wintering by parasites. Do it now!

Waders on show

This month's *Bird Watching* magazine features photographs from the new Hamlyn *Photographic Guide to the Waders of the World* by David Rosair & David Cottridge, and also an identification guide to juvenile waders by Julian Hough. The selection of our Bird Photograph of the Year photographs listed last month form a special three-page feature.

'The Zoologist'

The appeal for the donation or loan of a set of *The Zoologist* (*Brit. Birds* 88: 45) was answered independently by three long-standing subscribers. We sincerely thank Dougal Andrew, Dr W. R. P. Bourne, and R. S. R. Fitter for responding so generously to the Editorial Board's request.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

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MONTHLY MARATHON



The current 'Marathon' is well named. The two leaders—Jon Holt and Peter Sunesen—have each achieved runs of 15 correct answers, for they were both among the 69% of competitors who identified the bird in plate 74 as a Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*; it was photographed by Michael Tarrant in Morocco in April 1986. Misidentifications by entrants included Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostris*, Scottish Crossbill *L. scotica*, Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* and Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis*, as well as seven other species of lark (Alaudidae).

This month's hurdle is provided by plate 111 on page 394 and features two species, both of which should be identified.

We apologise for not previously having given details of the Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* (plate 10) photographed by T. Shiota in India in November 1977, and the Dunlin *Calidris alpina* (plate 26) photographed by R. K. Coles in Kent in September 1977.

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Plate 111. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 110: either seventeenth stage in seventh 'Marathon' or first stage in eighth 'Marathon'. Identify the two species. Read the rules on page 65 of the January issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th August 1995.



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 19th June to 9th July 1995.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* Flamborough Head (Humberside), 4th July.

Frigatebird *Fregata* Booterstown, Dublin (Co. Dublin), 22nd June (third record in last six years, all from the Dublin area).

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes* Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), last week of June.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* Female, Lady's Island Lake (Co. Wexford), 2nd July (possibly returning wintering individual).

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* Male near Burn of Hillside, Mainland (Orkney), present since mid April to 27th June (not reported until 22nd June).

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* Titchwell and Cley (both Norfolk), 3rd-6th July (probably present since 30th June).

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* Old Hall Marshes (Essex), 18th-27th June.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Minsmere and Sizewell area (Suffolk), 5th-9th July.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* Pool of Virkie (Shetland), 25th July.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* Tees-side (Cleveland), 2nd-9th July.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Lodmoor (Dorset), 8th July.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* Goole (Humberside), 19th June.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Filey Dam (North Yorkshire), 18th-19th June.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* Haverton Hole (Cleveland), 23rd June to 2nd July.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* Fair Isle (Shetland), 27th June.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* One of up to three on Great Saltee (Co. Wexford) from mid June still present on 8th July.



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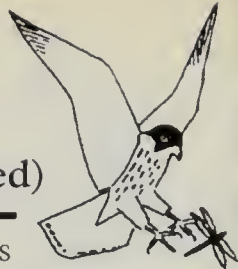
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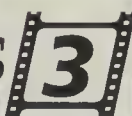
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Lark Sparrow in Suffolk: new to the Western Palearctic

Trevor D. Charlton

Landguard Point in coastal Suffolk has, over recent decades, proved to be the county's most important migratory watchpoint. Indeed, so much so that in 1984 an unofficial bird observatory developed, steered by a strong force of local ornithologists. Fortunately, this commitment still continues to this day.

Through its flourishing popularity and intensive coverage since the early 1980s, Landguard has played host to an impressive variety of rare birds from both the East and the West. Perhaps the most memorable of these was the Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*: an individual whose arrival was to provoke much controversy, and which was set to embark upon a prolonged passage before entering Category A of the British List.

The following account highlights the occurrence of this Lark Sparrow, which turned out to be Landguard's first major crowd-pulling bird.

On the warm and sunny afternoon of 30th June 1981, my wife Lesley (LHC) and I decided to visit Landguard Point with the intention of an afternoon's casual birding. Not surprisingly, as it was late June, there were few birds to see, so we switched our attention to the reserve's flora. This was, however, short-lived as, whilst walking the open short grassy sward near the Coastguard's Cottage at 14.45 BST, we flushed a flock of about 20 House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*, a Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* and an intriguing, slightly smaller and darker bird. The tantalisingly brief flight view of the smaller bird suggested a bunting *Emberiza*, with a relatively long tail which, when fanned, showed an extraordinary amount

of white on its edges and corners. The bird landed about 100 m away in a cluster of Yellow Horned-poppies *Glaucium flavum* on a raised shingle bank, where it remained completely concealed for a few tantalising minutes. As we approached to within 30 m of the poppies, the bird momentarily peeped out through the foliage, revealing a rather complex face-and-head pattern, recalling Rustic Bunting *E. rustica*, only to retreat again into obscurity. Being conscious of recent predominantly westerly weather, time of year and unusual tail pattern, I considered that Rustic Bunting was unlikely. So what could it be? Moments later, the bird showed again, this time out in the open, revealing all, including a startling dark breast-spot.

Having seen many of the American sparrows in the USA some years earlier, I realised that we were watching a British 'first', one of North America's few sparrows to sport such a breast marking; but which one?

Following rapid sketching and note-taking, I telephoned Derek Moore, then Suffolk's County Bird Recorder, from the Coastguard's Cottage. News of an unidentified Nearctic sparrow was quickly passed to local birders, and shortly afterwards the late Messrs Arthur Westcott and Harry Lee arrived, armed with a field guide. From the book, I was able positively to identify the bird as Europe's first Lark Sparrow.

Over the following eight days, the bird was well watched by many hundreds of observers. The bird allowed prolonged and sometimes close views which provided ideal opportunities for note-taking and photography (*Brit. Birds* 74: plate 236; 86: plate 201; 88: plates 112-114). The following description is based on field notes taken by TDC and LHC over several days.

Description

SIZE AND SHAPE Similar in size to a House Sparrow, though notably slimmer, longer-legged and longer-tailed. Head shape recalled typical bunting, often showing peaked rear crown.

HEAD PATTERN Very striking indeed. Crown-stripe creamy on forehead, merging with creamy-buff on crown and becoming greyer towards nape. Lateral crown-stripe appeared black forward of eye, becoming dark chestnut towards rear. Supercilium creamy, slightly buffier along upper edge. Eye-stripe black and thin, extending from bill through eye to rear edge of ear-coverts. Ear-coverts dark chestnut, beginning at base of bill, grading to paler chestnut towards rear, where prominent white spot present. Malar stripe black, starting very thin at bill base and thickening towards end. Submoustachial stripe white. Eye-ring white and broken, with most prominent area below eye, formed by white crescent. Nape greyish-brown, blending to warm buff breast sides.

UPPERPARTS Mantle, scapulars, back and rump grey-brown, perhaps a shade darker than those of female House Sparrow, with irregular blackish streaking extending to rump. Lesser

and median coverts darker brown than mantle, grading darker towards tips of median coverts, forming line of about five blackish spots with cream tips, resulting in thin but distinctive wing-bar. Outer greater coverts black-centred, grading paler brown towards innermost coverts.

All greater coverts edged pale brown, including tips, which formed indistinct wing-bar. Alula appeared completely dark brown. Greater primary coverts dark brown, edged pale brown. Primaries, secondaries and tertials dark brown, all edged pale brown, with secondaries and tertials darker than primaries. Short off-white notch recalling that of Wood Lark *Lullula arborea* present directly below closed greater primary coverts.

UNDERPARTS Chin and throat white. Upper breast white with conspicuous central black spot. Breast spot had white cleft on top side, forming horseshoe shape. Breast sides warm buff, with lower breast and belly greyish-white, shading to buff on flanks and vent. Vent bounded by dark brown chevron on each side of body, though not meeting on the underside, a feature not illustrated in field guides. Undertail-coverts creamy.

TAIL Blackish-centred, with most visible rectrices showing brown fringe, except outermost, which was white on outer web and broadly tipped white. White tips to each rectrix reduced in size towards centre of tail. Undertail appeared white.

BARE PARTS Eye appeared black. Bill pale lead-

grey with slightly paler lower mandible. Legs flesh-coloured with bluish-grey feet.

VOICE On the few occasions that we heard the bird call, it gave a quiet, disyllabic, nasal or coarse 'tsssi-tsssi', 'tssit-tssit' or 'prrrrip-prrrip', repeated two to four times in succession.

Behaviour

The Lark Sparrow was fairly approachable and occasionally offered views down to about 4 m. It fed mainly on its own, out in the open, either on a short-grass



Plates 112 & 113. Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*, Landguard Point, Suffolk, 4th July 1981 (David M. Cottridge)



sward interspersed with Common Restharrow *Ononis repens* and Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum* or on sandy-shingle ground, paths and road. It occasionally fed alongside House Sparrows and Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* in a rather typical bunting-like fashion, being crouched and showing very little, if any, leg. The bird most often hopped but on occasions ran, stopping sharply to peck at the ground in a rather plover-like manner. It sometimes scurried short distances across open ground in pursuit of low-flying insects, flicking its wings and tail in the process. When alarmed, it stood erect, stretching its head upwards.

Status and distribution

The Lark Sparrow occurs throughout western and central USA, with a range expansion to southeastern seaboard states in recent years. It winters in central and southern California, southern Arizona and south-central Texas, south to Central America.

Status on the British List

The identification of the Lark Sparrow was accepted unanimously by the British Birds Rarities Committee (*Brit. Birds* 75: 531). The BOU Records Committee considered that the escape possibility, especially from the Low Countries, could not be ruled out, and therefore took the cautious decision to place the species in Category D rather than admit it to the British List (*Ibis* 126: 443). The background to this decision was explained in detail in *British Birds* in an editorial response to a letter on ship-assisted passage by Steve N. G. Howell (*Brit. Birds* 78: 52-53). Subsequently, following new information about the species' distribution and migration in the USA, combined with a modification of the BOURC's definition of Category D, the BOURC decided to promote the Lark Sparrow's status to inclusion within Category A of the British List (*Ibis* 135: 221).

Almost ten years on, Barry Jarvis found Britain's second Lark Sparrow, at Waxham, Norfolk, on 15th May 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 84: plates 306 & 307; 86: 530).



Plate 114. Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*, Landguard Point, Suffolk, 3rd July 1981 (Nigel R. Jones)

Summary

The identification of a Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* observed at Landguard Point, Suffolk, from 30th June to 8th July 1981 was accepted and the species included in Category D. The occurrence has now been reconsidered and the species was admitted to Category A of the British & Irish List in 1993.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT R. A. Hume, Chairman of the British Birds Rarities Committee, has commented: 'This very distinctive species provided no major identification problems and the Suffolk record was accepted after a single circulation to the BBRC.'

Dr David Parkin, Chairman of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, has commented: 'There was never any doubt about the identification of this bird, and it was unanimously accepted as a Lark Sparrow by the BOURC. However, its arrival in midsummer at a location close to a major container port led most members of the Committee to conclude that the bird had probably arrived with the benefit of ship assistance. At the time (1983), Category D included species for which 'there is reasonable doubt that they have ever occurred in a wild state', or 'which have certainly arrived with ship assistance'. 'Probable' (rather than 'certain') assisted passage was not, therefore, any bar to inclusion in Category A. The Committee's North American consultant, however, expressed the strong opinion that Lark Sparrows did not cross the Gulf of Mexico, so were very unlikely to land on a ship and be carried on board across the Atlantic. Thus, there was the strange situation that those who believed that the bird had reached Europe on board ship were pressing for inclusion in Category A and those who believed that ship assistance was unlikely were espousing outright rejection (on the grounds that a natural crossing was highly unlikely, but that escape from captivity was far less improbable). The obvious compromise was inclusion in Category D, which did not (and does not) form part of the British & Irish List (*Ibis* 126: 443): limbo, an admittance that the Committee was uncertain. The decision was, however, and still is, widely misunderstood, many people being under the misapprehension that the bird's inclusion in Category D was because of the likelihood of ship assistance (the opposite of the actual reason!).

'In 1986, the criteria for the categorisation were reviewed and Category D2 was amended to include those birds which 'certainly arrived with a combination of ship and human assistance, including the provision of food and shelter'. This change was intended to recognise that birds can move about the World more or less naturally using ships, and that such birds are eligible for Category A, but that records involving birds whose survival had depended upon human intervention should still be excluded from the List and placed in Category D.

'At the request of Peter Lansdown—who was at the time Chairman of the BBRC—the record was re-assessed. He pointed out that Lark Sparrow both breeds and winters in southern Texas, and ships travel regularly between Houston, Texas, and Felixstowe. It was thus feasible that the bird could have boarded a ship in the Gulf of Mexico or the Florida straits and travelled across the Atlantic Ocean, leaving close to Landguard Point. The second record, from

Norfolk in 1991, might support this scenario, although there was also evidence that the species is imported into Belgium and the Netherlands (Peeters, 1986, *Vogeljaar* 34: 108).

'There are two races of Lark Sparrow, the nominate *grammacus* and the western *strigatus*, which extends into Mexico, especially in winter. Alan Knox compared photographs of the two British birds with skins in the Natural History Museum at Tring on behalf of BOURC, and concluded that both were of the nominate form. Had they been of the western race, they would have been deeply suspect, although the eastern race winters south to Mexico, from where they could also have been imported. Tim Inskipp, however, advised that he had no records of advertisements or imports into Britain, and correspondence from Mexico suggested that the species is rarely found in the bird markets.

'From this, it was concluded that Lark Sparrow was very unlikely to occur in trade, and that the Landguard Point record fell into the gap between the original and revised definitions concerning ship assistance. It was, therefore, agreed that it should be moved from Category D to Category A, and Lark Sparrow was admitted to the British & Irish List in 1993 (*Ibis* 135: 221).'



LOOKING BACK

'Honey-buzzard, *Pernis apivorus*. I could wish to exclude the vulgar name of *honey-buzzard*, for it only tends to perpetuate an error, since it is well known that the bird never eats honey. Ray called it "*Buteo apivorus* seu *vespivorus*," as if it fed solely on *bees* and *wasps*. Being an insectivorous as well as a carnivorous species, I have long named it *larvivorus*, because it is most fond of the *larvae* of bees and wasps. Therefore the *gentle* buzzard is, I consider, a very apt English name for it; gentle being, as all disciples of honest Isaac Walton need not be told—a *maggot*.' (*The Zoologist* 3: 1053, September 1845).

'A little after midday on September 19th 1920, while sitting on St. Michael's Mount, I saw a line of ten black long-necked birds fly from the east over Marazion (about half a mile away) and drop down to the Marazion Marsh; on reaching this marsh, I saw at once that the flock consisted of ten Glossy Ibises (*Plegadis f. falcinellus*). A. W. BOYD.' (*Brit. Birds* 14: 137).

In September 1970, you could have bought Bardsey Island, Gwynedd (then Caernarvonshire), lock, stock and barrel for a mere £50,000 or so. It was also all change at Fair Isle, where Roy Dennis had left to join the RSPB staff in Speyside, to be replaced as FIBO's warden by Roger Broad (*Brit. Birds* 63: 397, September 1970).

Richard's Pipits *Anthus novaeseelandiae* were in the news 25 years ago. Of over 120 in autumn 1970, the first were two on Bardsey on 7th September, and about 40 occurred during the five days 23rd-27th September.

On 20th September 1970, a warbler-like bird was flushed from sedge around the Pool on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly. It was seen again on 21st and 23rd and was identified as Europe's first Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia cirina*; the descriptions were subjected to minute scrutiny by the BBRC and the BOURC and the record was eventually accepted in 1972 (*Brit. Birds* 65: 203-205, 351; *Ibis* 114: 446).



Studies of West Palearctic birds*

194. Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*

David Harper

'Look at the common Corn Bunting as he sits on wires or the hedgetop: he is lumpy, loose-feathered, spiritless. He is a dull bird and seems to know it.'

(Warde-Fowler 1922)

The Corn Bunting has rarely received a good press. Even its common names tend to refer to its dullness, such as Hoar-frosted Chirper in Finnish (*Härmäsukku*) or Grey Bunting in both Dutch (*Grauwe Gors*) and German (*Grauanammer*). The only positive thing that Seth-Smith (1937) could find to say about Corn Buntings was that they were good to eat (although he provided no recipes). Morris (1863) agreed, having tasted them as a schoolboy, and huge numbers used to be caught for the table, from Orkney (Donald *et al.* 1994) south to Morocco (Johns 1909). In the Isles of Scilly, however, bounties were paid to encourage the destruction of what was considered to be an agricultural pest (Penhallurick 1978). Corn Buntings used to be regarded as particularly damaging to cereal crops, worse even than House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* (Morris 1863), earning themselves the name of Corn Tief (Thief) in parts of Scotland.

In the last decade, Corn Buntings have attracted considerable attention from ornithologists, partly because of a dramatic reduction in numbers (Donald *et al.* 1994; Donald & Evans in press) and partly because of their interesting behaviour. Peter McGregor has studied Corn Bunting song from the wild coasts of Cornwall to the flowery machair of the Outer Hebrides. Ian Hartley and Mike Shepherd unravelled many details of the behavioural ecology of the Hebridean population. Together with Timothy Robson and Terry Burke, they have studied the paternity

*This paper, and others in this long-running *British Birds* series, will be published in a forthcoming HarperCollins book.

of Corn Buntings using DNA fingerprinting. Des Thompson contributed to all these studies and also collaborated with Simon Gribbin in a study of the habitat selection and mating system of Corn Buntings around the Ribble Estuary. Farther afield, Anders Moller and Joachim Hegelbach made similar major studies on behaviour in Denmark and Switzerland respectively. Paul Donald ran the BTO Corn Bunting surveys, persuading over 700 observers to scour the countryside for this 'dull' bird. He is now planning to study Corn Bunting breeding success in relation to crop types in the East Anglian fens.

I have been watching Corn Buntings on the South Downs around the University of Sussex, near to the site illustrated by Leverton (1993). This is one of the few areas of low-intensity agriculture left in southern England (Bignal & McCracken 1993). Since 1985, student 'volunteers' and I have surveyed singing males in an area of 3,374 ha, with a mean altitude of 125 m (30-225 m). We do, however, have a long way to go to match the 17-year study by Lübcke (1977). In 1985, our study area was dominated by cereals (48%) and managed grass (33%), with very little other tillage (2%) or fallow (1%). By 1993, changes in EC Agricultural Policy (Robinson 1991) had altered the picture considerably. Grass (44%) had overtaken cereals (24%) and there were substantial areas of other crops (7%) and fallow (9%). During this period, spring sowing of cereals was virtually eliminated. To answer specific questions about Corn Buntings, we colour-ringed them on smaller study sites within the large study area. In 1986, Peter McGregor and Verena Walford tape-recorded some of the males as part of a study on song dialects.

Geographical range and distribution

The Corn Bunting is the only species in the genus *Miliaria* and is distinguished from the 37 species of *Emberiza* buntings by its large size, details of bill structure and by having a complete post-juvenile moult. Like most Emberizid buntings, it is omnivorous, with invertebrates making up almost a third of the diet (W. E. Collinge in Witherby *et al.* 1940). The plumage is very variable (Bannerman 1953), both in how buff it is and in the amount of black streaking on the sides of the throat and breast (fig. 1). In consequence, many of the races proposed by taxonomists are dubious and most authors recognise only two subspecies: *M. c. calandra* and *M. c. buturlini*. Even these might be better merged (e.g. Witherby *et al.* 1940; Howard & Moore 1980).

The nominate race includes (R. A. Paynter in Peters 1970) the so-called races *arrani* (Arran & West Scotland), *thanneri* (Canaries), *parrotti* (Corsica and Sardinia), *graeca* (Greece), *volhynica* (West Russia), *minor* (Caucasus) and *caucasica* (Caucasus). In Europe, the nominate race breeds from the Mediterranean north to Orkney, southern Sweden and northwest Russia. Other populations breed in the Canary Islands (Bannerman 1953) and North Africa from Morocco east to Tunisia or possibly even Libya (Hollom *et al.* 1988). The nominate race ranges from being totally migratory in the northeast of its range to largely sedentary in the southwest. Most migrants winter within the breeding range, but they also penetrate farther south into Morocco (Pineau & Giraud-Audine 1977, 1979) and even to Mauritania (Curry-Lindahl 1981) and east along the North African coast through Libya, possibly reaching Egypt. Around

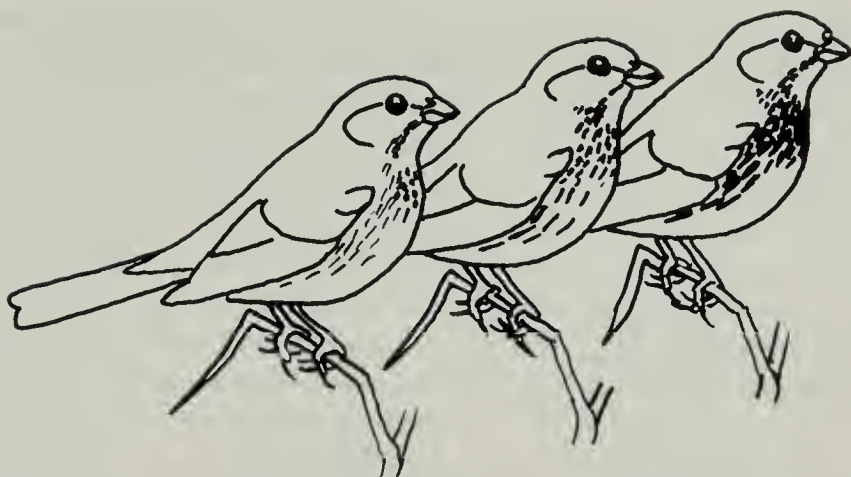


Fig. 1. Variation in breast streaking of Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*. The bird in the centre would be unusually heavily streaked for a juvenile, while that on the right would be unusually strongly marked for an adult.

the Strait of Gibraltar, numbers increase during October and fall slowly during the spring from February onwards (Finlayson 1992). Arrivals on the West Russian breeding grounds continue until mid May, and most have left by late September (Dementiev & Gladkhov 1954).

The extent of migration in Britain and Ireland is unclear. Some authors (e.g. Saunders 1899) have suggested that movements are 'very pronounced' (Nicholson 1951). In southern England, some depart to sea from Selsey Bill (des Forges & Harber 1963) and the Seven Sisters (own data) in both autumn and spring. Vagrants occasionally occur at island sites where they do not breed, from Lundy (Dymond 1980) to Jersey (Le Sueur 1976). Only one British-ringed Corn Bunting has, however, ever been recovered abroad, in France (Mead & Clark 1993), and most authors regard the British population as highly sedentary (e.g. Cady & Hume 1988). On the other hand, ringing recoveries suggest that they are more mobile than Yellowhammers *E. citrinella*, with about 42% of recoveries more than 5 km from the place of ringing, compared with 15% (Mead & Clark 1993).

Most Corn Buntings appear to breed within 1 km of their birthplace and often within 300 m (McGregor *et al.* 1988). It is, however, very difficult to detect movements longer than this, and I have had one male move 4 km and one female move 7 km. Once they have established a territory, males rarely move outside it. If they do, it is usually for a distance of less than 200 m (McGregor *et al.* 1988). Females are more mobile, but rarely breed more than 800 m from a previous nest. These are very short distances compared with their winter wanderings: one of my marked females was found dead over 20 km from her previous year's nest.

The rather grey eastern race, *M. c. buturlini*, breeds from Syria to Turkestan, south to Iran. It is a partial migrant south to Sinai, reaching Egypt in some years (Bannerman 1953), and the Arabian Gulf as far southeast as Oman (Gallagher & Woodcock 1980). Winter quarters are occupied from late October to March (Bannerman 1953).

Biometrics and moult

Male Corn Buntings are much larger than females (Follows 1969; Prŷs-Jones 1976; Boddy & Blackburn 1978). Table 1 summarises the weights and wing

Table 1. Weights and wing lengths of Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra* of known age and sex. Data expressed as means (with range, standard deviation and sample size in parentheses). Juveniles were considered to become yearlings once they had completed their first primary moult. Data from South Downs in East Sussex, and analysed using t-tests (0.001 significance level).

Males were significantly heavier than females in all three age classes and juvenile females were significantly lighter than both of the older age classes of females. There were no other significant differences in mean weight. Fourteen of the 15 possible comparisons of mean wing length were significant; the exception was that between yearling and adult females.

Measurement	Age class (EURING Code)	Males	Females
Weight (g)	Juvenile (3J)	54.5 (42-65; 5.4; 159)	41.6 (33-52; 4.4; 161)
	Yearling (3/5)	53.8 (45-63; 4.2; 83)	43.8 (33-54; 4.6; 97)
	Adult (6)	54.6 (44-65; 4.8; 46)	45.2 (35-54; 4.2; 48)
Wing length (mm)	Juvenile (3J)	97.9 (94-103; 1.8; 154)	89.9 (86-95; 1.7; 169)
	Yearling (3/5)	100.3 (94-105; 2.3; 88)	90.9 (85-96; 2.1; 96)
	Adult (6)	101.8 (95-106; 2.0; 44)	91.2 (86-96; 2.4; 50)

lengths of Corn Buntings of known age and sex. Many males are as heavy as Redwings *Turdus iliacus*, while some females are as light as Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris*. The figures for male and female wing lengths are similar to Russian figures of 99.9 and 91.2 mm respectively (Dementiev & Gladkhov 1954). In Portugal, however, it is possible that the sexes are not so different in size (C. J. Mead in Svensson 1992).

Although very variable in size, the ‘bib’ on the sides of the breast offers little clue about a Corn Bunting’s age or sex. All five marked individuals on the South Downs with a complete gorget across the chest (right-hand bird in fig. 1) were, however, males. Juveniles tend to have fewer dark feathers on the sides of the breast (left-hand bird in fig. 1), which is why early texts often referred to them as ‘bibless’. Some adults have just as little streaking on the breast, and a much better way of identifying juveniles is by the broad, pale fringes to their wing-coverts. Adults have narrower fringes that are usually much buffer when fresh, although they can subsequently become very bleached. Sometimes, a few juvenile feathers are retained after the first moult, which can help to age some full-grown birds.

The Corn Bunting is one of the few passerines with a complete post-juvenile moult, during which young birds replace all their feathers in the autumn after hatching. In the Western Palearctic, they share this feature with all the larks (Alaudidae), Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*, Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*, Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*, Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*, all the starlings (Sturnidae) and all the sparrows (Passeridae). A minority of the juveniles of some finch species, such as Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*, Greenfinch, Linnet *C. cannabina* and European Serin *Serinus serinus*, also undergo a complete moult (Harris 1992; Svensson 1992). It remains unclear what this motley list of birds have in common, although a complete post-juvenile moult seems to be commonest among tropical species (Fogden 1972). A second unusual feature of Corn Bunting moult is that the primaries finish moulting several days ahead of the tail feathers (Newton 1968). The first individuals start to moult in July, with unpaired males tending to begin first and paired males tending to start ahead of females. Juveniles begin to moult about five weeks after

leaving the nest. Although most individuals finish by mid October, a few late-nesting females and their offspring do not start until early September and, since primary moult lasts about 80 days (Ginn & Melville 1983), probably do not finish until late November.

Breeding habitat

The distribution of Corn Buntings is notoriously patchy, both in Britain (Lack 1986) and on the Continent (Nicholson 1951). It has proved impossible to work out why. Corn Buntings are believed to have originated in steppe-like terrain around Turkestan, together with the Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps* (Duncker 1912). They are almost always found in dry, open countryside (Dolman 1992), and are common only in areas between the July isotherms of 17°C and 32°C (Voous 1960). An avoidance of areas of high rainfall (Lack 1986) might explain the strongly coastal distribution in northwestern Britain and Ireland (Donald *et al.* 1994). Corn Buntings avoid moorland in northwestern Europe, but occasionally breed on lowland heaths (Walpole-Bond 1938; Bannerman 1953). Local names for Corn Buntings often imply an association with tillage, such as Docken Sparrow (Shetland: docken refers to docks *Rumex*) and Clodman (Sussex). An even more specific association with cereals is implied by many vernacular names, including *Kornspurv* (Sweden), Cornbill (Shetland), Stubble Lark (Sussex) and Fat Bird of the Barley (Hebrides).

Most studies of habitat selection have confirmed this association between Corn Buntings and cereals (Mead & Smith 1982; Møller 1983; Thompson & Gribbin 1986; Smith *et al.* 1993; Donald & Forrest in press). Some also suggest a preference for barley *Hordeum vulgare* over wheat *Triticum aestivum* (BOS 1985; Thompson & Gribbin 1986; O'Connor & Shrubbs 1986; Lack 1992), although BTO data do not (Donald & Evans in press; Donald & Forrest in press). A preference for barley might reflect differences in the invertebrate fauna of different cereal crops (Thompson & Gribbin 1986), but is surprising since most insectivorous passerines tend to forage more in wheat than in barley (G. S. Cracknell in Lack 1992).

Other evidence suggests that other crops are as important for Corn Buntings as are cereals. Hayfields are a preferred habitat in the Netherlands (SOVON 1987) and on the South Downs. They were also widely used in Sutherland (Raven 1927), where Corn Buntings are now extinct (Donald *et al.* 1994). Other crops favoured in some areas are field bean *Vicia faba*, flax *Linum usitatissimum* and oilseed rape *Brassica napus* (Mead & Smith 1982; Lack 1992). The importance of non-cereal crops was emphasised by the BTO Corn Bunting survey in 1993: regional population sizes were positively correlated with the total area of tillage, but not with the proportion of tillage consisting of cereals or with the total area of farmland (Donald & Evans in press).

Corn Buntings are not always associated with tillage. Two studies in eastern Scotland found no preference by Corn Buntings for any field type, including grassland (Goodbody 1955; MacDonald 1964). Around the Tweed, Evans (in Donald *et al.* 1994) considered that they favoured 'barren spots covered with rough grass' and fallow areas are sometimes preferred (Mead & Smith 1982). In a Swiss study, Corn Buntings bred in marshes and damp grassland, avoiding

tillage altogether (Hegelbach & Ziswiler 1979; Hegelbach 1984), and drained marshes are a popular nesting habitat around the Strait of Gibraltar (Finlayson 1992). In the latter area, Corn Buntings seem to be less specialised in their habitat requirements than are Rock Buntings *Emberiza cia* and Cirl Buntings *E. cirius*, breeding even in open areas within woods and the low scrub known as matorral (Finlayson 1992).

Hedgerow loss may reduce habitat suitability for Corn Buntings (Murton & Westwood 1974; Donald *et al.* 1994). Lack (1992) suggested that they 'need some woody vegetation' and regarded them as 'nesting and feeding mainly in hedges or other field boundaries'. CBC data suggest, however, an active avoidance of trees in hedgerows (Lack 1992), making a striking contrast with Yellowhammer (Morgan & O'Connor 1980).

It is not surprising that most authors have used the widespread, but far from universal, association with tillage to link the fate of Corn Buntings with agricultural change. Other authors (Baxter & Rintoul 1953; Parslow 1973; Thom 1986; Harrison 1988) have, however, failed to detect any detailed correlation in their population size or range with farming practices. The initial clearances of woodland, starting about 7,000 years ago, must have benefited open-country species such as Corn Buntings (Donald *et al.* 1994). Indeed, Voous (1960) suggested that Corn Buntings owe their presence over much of Europe to the spread of cereal agriculture. They had, however, arrived in Britain much earlier, about 11,500 years ago (Bramwell 1984; Harrison 1988). The Cresswell Crags cave deposits from Derbyshire show that they lived in the same area as birds from open habitats, such as Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, and from scrub or woodland, such as Greenfinch and Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* (Jenkinson 1984). Since grassland subsequently became rare in Britain between 10,000 and 6,000 years ago, it is possible that Corn Buntings were temporarily exterminated. On the other hand, they may have hung on in open dry areas, such as the brecks of East Anglia, sugar-limestones of Teesdale and machair of the Atlantic coast (Rackham 1986; Ferns 1992).

Studying habitat selection by Corn Buntings is complicated by their strong site fidelity, even in the face of dramatic habitat changes. Even housing development on adjacent land has little effect (Walpole-Bond 1938). On the South Downs, I have never found a nest in improved pasture, yet males rarely abandon fields converted to grass from other crops, until at least part way through the next breeding season. Similarly, on a Cumbrian farm, the small numbers of Corn Buntings were much less likely than Sky Larks to change their distribution in response to crop changes (Robson & Williamson 1972). It seems likely that Corn Buntings either evolved in rather stable habitats, in which habitat reassessment was unnecessary, or have difficulties assessing the future quality of a site: is this green stuff newly sown barley or grass?

Winter habitat

In Britain, stubble fields are the most important wintering habitat, holding about half of the flocks and about 60% of the individuals detected in the BTO Winter Corn Bunting Survey (Donald & Evans 1994). Weedy stubbles held about twice as many Corn Buntings as did clean ones. Winter cereals and improved grassland

were avoided, and other open habitats, such as rough grassland and bare till, were used roughly in proportion to their availabilities. In Gibraltar, most wintering Corn Buntings occur in pastures (Arroyo & Telleria 1984) and low areas of scrub known as matorral (Finlayson 1992). Johns (1909) reported that, in North Africa in winter, 'all the trees in the public roads and squares of the villages are literally covered with these birds'. In the light of recent population declines (see below), it would be interesting to know if they are still.

The BTO Winter Corn Bunting Survey (Donald & Evans 1994) found that the most common winter flock size was two. Almost two-thirds of the 221 flocks in the survey contained fewer than ten individuals and less than 5% exceeded 60. Much larger flocks can form, such as the 500 seen on kale *Brassica oleracea accepta* in East Sussex (SOS 1992). Although large flocks are relatively rare, they contain the majority of Corn Buntings. For example, the Winter Survey suggested that, while the mean flock size is six, the average Corn Bunting flocks with at least 20 companions. This number is often swelled by other seed-eaters; on the South Downs, these are typically House Sparrows, Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs*, Greenfinches and Yellowhammers. As can be guessed from this list, many of these flocks are near buildings where grain is stored or fed to stock. Aggression between Corn Buntings in flocks may be reduced by disputes being settled, without fighting, on the basis of the variation in plumage (fig. 1). Dark birds tend to dominate individuals with less breast streaking, although they are not more capable of winning escalated fights (Maynard Smith & Harper 1988).

Outside the breeding season, Corn Buntings form communal roosts, often in association with other buntings. These can contain over 300 birds, but most are much smaller, with few on the South Downs exceeding 15. Marked individuals travel up to 4 km from their feeding sites to visit roosts, and regularly change roost site, even if not caught at the first one. Scrub appears to be the most common roost site, but Corn Buntings are so catholic in their choice of roosting habitat that a shortage of suitable sites is unlikely to be an important reason for population declines (see M. Shrubb in Lack 1986). They often roost on the ground (Bannerman 1953), both on open fields and on saltmarshes (e.g. Saunders 1899), sometimes in the company of Sky Larks. Like most buntings, with the possible exception of Yellowhammers (Frost 1979), they also seem to like roosting in swamps, especially reed-beds (Bibby & Lunn 1982). Less usual sites on the South Downs have included stacks of hay bales, a derelict barn, a combine harvester and a dried-up pond.

Population changes

The Corn Bunting is declining over most of northwest and central Europe, although stable or even increasing in the south (Tucker 1991). In 1993, there were probably between 32,000 and 46,000 Corn Buntings left in Britain (Donald & Evans in press), far fewer than previously thought (Marchant *et al.* 1990; Gibbons *et al.* 1993). The decline and its possible causes have been reviewed by Donald *et al.* (1994). A number of changes in farming practices were implicated, including a reduction in the area of barley cultivated, a switch towards autumn sowing of cereals, replacement of hay by silage and a reduction in traditional rotations. Food supplies may have been reduced by increased use of pesticides

and by the removal of hedgerows and rough ground. Access to water might be important, since the 'Corn Bunting is particularly fond of its ablutions' and is 'a very thirsty species' (Walpole-Bond 1938). Improved field-drainage has been implicated in the decline of Corn Buntings in the Netherlands (Hustings *et al.* 1990). Climatic changes, especially increased rain, may also be involved (Evans & Flower 1967; M. Shrubbs in Lack 1986).

Mating system

Some Continental studies have reported that Corn Buntings are promiscuous (Hegelbach & Ziswiler 1979; Moller 1983) and this has been quoted in books on British birds (e.g. Cady & Hume 1988). Promiscuity is a very unusual mating system (Krebs & Davies 1993) and has also been described for one North American bunting, the Sharp-tailed Sparrow *Ammodramus caudacutus* (Woolfenden 1956). In Britain, however, most male Corn Buntings are monogamous, with some males remaining unpaired and some becoming polygynous. The highest frequencies of polygyny reported are 100% for 15 Cornish males (Ryves & Ryves 1934b) and 35% for 50 males on North Uist (Hartley *et al.* 1993). On the South Downs, the proportion of males that were polygynous in different territory clusters ranged from 0 to 33%. Most polygynous males are bigynous and cases of more than three females nesting on the same territory are exceptional (Thompson & Gribbin 1986; Hartley *et al.* 1993). One male on the South Downs, however, attracted 18 females in one year, up to six of which were nesting simultaneously.

Polyandry has rarely been reported, although females sometimes change mates between successive nesting attempts (Robertson 1954; MacDonald 1965). At one site in East Sussex, however, there were four cases in which females copulated with two males, both of which fed their nestlings. The males were aggressive to each other, but used some of the same song posts.

Early authors assumed that polygyny by Corn Buntings was due to a female-biased sex ratio (Ryves & Ryves 1934b; Follows 1969). Samples caught in winter flocks and at communal roosts typically contain between 60% and 75% females (Follows 1969; Boddy & Blackburn 1978; own data). This excess of females may be exaggerated if, for example, males are more likely to avoid or escape from nets. The sex ratio of Corn Buntings breeding on North Uist was exactly 1:1 (Hartley *et al.* 1993) and pooling of all my data for the South Downs gives only a slight excess of females, although this difference was statistically significant (55% out of 434). The sex ratios in small populations, however, can depart wildly from this, with an excess of either sex. This may explain the extreme sex ratio of at least 77% females reported by Ryves & Ryves (1934b).

A male's mating success appears to be influenced by his song output, with polygynous males singing more than less-successful ones (Moller 1983; Thompson & Gribbin 1986). On the South Downs, polygyny was very rare among males with no cereal in their territories and, as in Lancashire (Thompson & Gribbin 1986), it was more common among males defending barley rather than wheat. Some sites are occupied by several females in successive years, despite the territorial male being replaced in the meantime. This is consistent with the idea that polygyny is related to habitat quality, but detailed study on North Uist

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Plate 115. Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, with useful size comparison with Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, Dorset, April 1982 (Peter Gasson)



Plate 116. Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, East Yorkshire, June 1992 (M. Curley)

revealed no such correlation (Hartley 1992). Since both sexes regularly feed off territory, the cause of the apparent associations between habitat and male mating success is unclear.

Pair formation

In my study area, established males visit their territories briefly even during the depths of winter, usually singing while there. They become regular visitors to their territories in January, around the time that yearling males start to establish territories. Elsewhere, males begin to abandon the winter flocks between February (Hertfordshire: Smith *et al.* 1993) and April (North Uist: Shepherd 1992), suggesting a south-to-north cline in settlement date within Britain. Territory settlement continues until mid June, after the first nesting attempts have started. In the Netherlands, settlement continues for longer on arable than on grassland (SOVON 1987). Unpaired males continue to switch between sites all summer.

When a territorial male is approached by other Corn Buntings, he often begins to sing from a song post or flies towards them, singing in flight. Usually, he is ignored, despite pursuing the flock well beyond his territory, sometimes flying up into the flock and circling. Some other individuals are, however, attracted to the male, who rapidly lands if airborne and commences a wing-quivering display, either from a perch or on open ground. This display is accompanied by a very rapid version of the flight call, 'titi.' (Andrew 1957b), and sometimes alternates with nest-site displays (see below). Despite the male's endeavours, the other Corn Buntings usually leave, but sometimes remain. Colour-ringing on the South Downs confirmed that those that stayed were females, and that at least some of them visited several males before pairing. A male and his mate(s) usually ignore each other but, when they do not, can be very aggressive. The role of so-called sexual chases, in which males relentlessly pursue their mate, is unclear (Andrew 1957a). They sometimes flush the female to do so, and frequently sing while doing so. These chases are not associated with copulation, and often occur during the incubation and nestling periods.

Breeding

Corn Buntings nest unusually late in the year: laying dates in England (1948-89) from the BTO Nest Records Scheme range from 2nd May to 7th August, with a mean of 21st June (Yom-Tov 1992). This late laying date probably reflects a later peak in food abundance for nestlings and laying females than that for either Reed Bunting *E. schoenichus* (mean laying date 21st May) or Yellowhammer (2nd June). The female and her brood depend largely on ripening cereal grain and invertebrates, which both become more common as the summer progresses (Aebischer 1990; Potts 1990). There are two other non-exclusive explanations for the late breeding season of Corn Buntings compared with other buntings (Yom-Tov 1992). First, larger species probably need more food to meet their basic metabolic requirements, and it has been suggested, mainly on the basis of data from tits *Parus* (Dunn 1976; P. J. Jones in Perrins 1979), that this forces them to lay later. Secondly, late laying might be a result of reduced parental care by males, assuming that the abundance of food for chicks tends to increase during the breeding season (Yom-Tov & Hilborn 1981). A tendency for polygynous

passerines to lay later than do related monogamous species has been reported for four other British genera (redstarts *Phoenicurus*, reed warblers *Acrocephalus*, scrub warblers *Sylvia* and leaf warblers *Phylloscopus*) and for North American wrens (Troglodytidae) (Yom-Tov 1992). Late nesting is not, however, associated with polygyny among the thrushes *Turdus* (Norman 1994).

In southern Europe and North Africa, most clutches are laid from mid April onwards, with the earliest clutches (from 20th March) appearing to be those at low altitudes in the Canary Islands (Bannerman 1953) and those from the area around the Caspian Sea (Dementiev & Gladkhov 1954). Egg-laying continues until late August in Denmark (Møller 1983).

The location of Corn Bunting nests appears to vary. Some authors report that they are mainly located in the crop, often far from the field margin (e.g. Saunders 1899; Andrew 1956; MacDonald 1964), while others suggest that most nests are close to or on the field margin (e.g. Lack 1992). I found most nests on the South Downs in rank vegetation next to fields or in the outer 5 m of the crops (nests in hay and silage were more likely to be farther out into the crop). This is not surprising, since most of the territories were concentrated around the field margins, as were those in Denmark (Møller 1983). Moreover, invertebrate densities tend to be highest near field margins (Potts 1986). Seasonal trends in nest sites are confusing, with some reports that nests are more likely to be in the crop early in the year (e.g. Walpole-Bond 1938) and others suggesting the reverse (Lack 1992). Differences between areas in how dense the crop has become by a certain date and in how early it is harvested may account for this inconsistency.

The nest is built by the female alone, although males often carry material. Prior to building, males often give nest-site displays (in sites of varying suitability). They dart into nooks and crannies, giving a version of wing-quivering display seen during pair formation. Nest-site displays are, however, accompanied by a very different call, a quiet, rather conversational 'sisi . . .'. The nest is a loose cup of grass; on my study area it was most often built from Barren Brome *Bromus sterilis*. The cup is tightly lined with fine grasses such as bents *Agrostis* and fescues *Festuca*, plant roots and hair. Nests are usually well concealed in dense vegetation, but a few are spectacularly obvious on bare soil. Most are on the ground under herbs (e.g. Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*) or a few centimetres above it in a grass tussock (e.g. Tor-grass *Brachypodium pinnatum*) or small bush, such as Gorse *Ulex europaeus* or Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*. Only a few studies have found bush-nesting to be at all common, but there are records of nests up to 1.7 m above the ground (Ryves & Ryves 1934a; Woods 1950). Nests in bushes tend to be untidier than normal, as if the loose cup keeps collapsing during construction. Ground nests are frequently close to a landmark, such as a tall weed or a large flint.

Copulations are hard to miss, even when they occur on the ground, because the male gives loud 'kwaa' copulation calls (Andrew 1957b). They are also often associated with aggression between the pair, and males may hover persistently over the female's back. Most observers agree that Corn Buntings copulate infrequently, even though there is a record of a pair copulating twice in five minutes (Hartley *et al.* 1993). On the South Downs, however, I estimated that females copulated about 55 times per clutch, mainly in the week before egg-laying (but see G. Niethammer in Witherby *et al.* 1940). Another difference between



Plate 117. Corn Bunting *Miharia calandra*, Spain, April 1991 (Axel Halley)

Plate 118. Corn Bunting *Miharia calandra*, France, July 1975 (G. Oliso)





Plate 119. Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, Ayrshire, July 1980 (*Don Smith*)

Plate 120. Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, Morocco, December 1991 (*Axel Halley*)



studies is that the observers on North Uist only once saw a male attempt to copulate with a female with which he was not paired (out of a total of 17 copulations; Hartley *et al.* 1993), while I saw such extra-pair copulations regularly on the South Downs. The North Uist study used DNA fingerprinting to demonstrate that very few, if any, chicks were fathered in this way. I wish that I knew whether this was true for my birds.

Like the Yellowhammer, the Corn Bunting used to be called the Writing-Lark (Saunders 1899) because its eggs are usually covered by dark scribbles. These are embarrassingly easy to rub off freshly laid eggs. The scribbles, which are often purple-fringed, are usually scattered all over the egg, but are sometimes concentrated at the broader end. The eggs are slightly glossy, and the background colour is usually off-white with a variable hint of buff, pink, purple or blue. A few are so dark, however, that the scribbles are hard to see. I have found one clutch of unmarked cream eggs.

Like most passerines, Corn Buntings lay one egg per day (with an occasional gap in the laying sequence), usually in the first two hours of daylight. On average, they lay fewer eggs than do Yellowhammers and more than do Reed Buntings (Yom-Tov 1992). Most clutches are of three to five eggs; in Sussex, clutches of one, two or six are rare (Walpole-Bond 1931, 1938) and, throughout Britain, clutches of seven are exceptional (Witherby *et al.* 1940). The graph in Greenwood *et al.* (1993) is misleading in this respect, because it extrapolates beyond the range of clutch sizes in the data set. The mean clutch size in England between 1948 and 1989 was 3.8 (Yom-Tov 1992), rather smaller than the 4.7 recorded in Germany (Gliemann 1973). Clutches of seven are common in Iberia (P. Donald verbally), reversing the usual trend of clutch size and latitude.

Incubation, which is by the female alone, often starts with the penultimate egg (B. H. Ryves in Witherby *et al.* 1940) and typically lasts 12 to 14 days. The chicks usually hatch at night or in the first few hours of daylight. They are well covered by buffish down and have a flesh-coloured gape with yellow flanges at the base of the mandibles. Their eyes open about five to six days after hatching, and their primary feathers emerge from their quills after about six or seven days. They can leave the nest from nine days old, well before they can fly, but some appear to return. Certainly, some nests are not finally abandoned until 14 days (exceptionally 17 days) after hatching. The chicks are fed for up to 24 days after leaving the nest (maximum 34 days after hatching). Many broods are impossible to monitor, because they leave their natal territory as soon as they can fly (as early as five days after leaving the nest). A few of these broods are found, together with their mothers, at nearby feeding sites, such as stubble fields.

Both nestlings and fledglings are fed almost entirely on invertebrates. In East Sussex, cereal-feeding sawflies, especially *Dolerus*, are very important, as they are to Reed Buntings in Kazakhstan (A. V. Badulin in Potts 1986). The larvae of hoverflies (Diptera: Syrphidae) are taken in large numbers on some territories. Beetles ranging from carabids to rove beetles (especially *Tachyporus*), arachnids, small snails, plant bugs and flies are the other items commonly fed to chicks. Most of the 633 or more species of invertebrates found in cereal fields (Potts 1990) are, however, probably taken to some extent, together with many from adjoining habitats. Even strong-flying species, such as adult butterflies and damselflies, are not entirely safe. Nor is small size any protection against Corn

Buntings: aphids are sometimes collected in large numbers after summer spraying, as observed for Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus* (Greig-Smith 1990). Some prey items suggest a degree of desperation, particularly Seven-spot Ladybirds *Coccinella 7-punctata*, which are notorious for their toxicity to nestlings (Marples *et al.* 1989). Ripening grain is also fed to nestlings (Watson 1992a), and fledglings seem to rely almost entirely on grain as they learn to feed themselves.

The contribution made by males to feeding the brood is very variable. Most provide between 10% and 20% of the feeds delivered, but some provide very few, if any, while others almost match their mate's effort. The reasons for this variation are not known; surprisingly, polygynous males are not strikingly less devoted fathers than are monogamous ones. Males seem to eat fewer invertebrates than do females during the nesting period (remains in 19% of faeces compared with 83%), and it is possible that males are not very competent at catching them or find them too time-consuming. Chicks, especially fledged ones, are sometimes fed by other juveniles (Ryves & Ryves 1934b). On the South Downs, colour-ringing revealed that most of these helpers were females and that most were probably feeding half-siblings with the same father as themselves. Although each helper delivers only a few feeds per day, juvenile helpers may make a significant contribution, since several of them often feed the same chick. Such helping by juveniles is unusual, although it is known for Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* (Gibbons 1987). The reason for juvenile male Corn Buntings rarely feeding chicks might be very simple: they are often having problems maintaining their body weight (see table 1 on page 404 for sexual dimorphism). In years of high chick mortality, males often beg in vain, and females end up rearing a brood with a female-biased sex ratio. This loss of sons is most severe when several broods are being fed on the same territory.

Like Yellowhammers and Reed Buntings (Lack 1963; Glue & Morgan 1972), Corn Buntings are rarely brood-parasitised by Common Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* (Ryves & Ryves 1934b; F. C. R. Jourdain in Lack 1963). Given the high proportion of insects fed to their own chicks, Corn Buntings ought to make tolerable foster parents, and they can rear Common Cuckoos at least as far as fledging (Ryves & Ryves 1934b). It is at first sight surprising that so few Corn Buntings get brood-parasitised, particularly since Black-faced *E. spodocephala* and Meadow Buntings *E. cioides* are major hosts for Common Cuckoos in Japan (T. Royama in Lack 1963). One possible reason is that very few female Common Cuckoos lay eggs after late June (Glue & Morgan 1972), so missing many Corn Bunting nests. Secondly, there is only limited habitat overlap between Corn Buntings and the major hosts of Common Cuckoos in Europe (Glue & Morgan 1972; Fuller 1982; Cramp 1985).

Song

During the breeding season, males sing incessantly throughout the day (Gyllin 1967). Although song seems to be important in mate attraction (see above), it is also used during fights between males, suggesting a role in territory defence as well. Fighting males often take turns to make swooping attacks on each other from nearby perches, interspersing these with snatches of song and 'moth-flights'

which involve exaggeratedly slow wing-beats (Andrew 1957a). Most males have fewer than six regular song posts, which are usually 1-2 m above the ground on a fence, bush or herb, although they can range from large stones to trees and electricity pylons. Favoured perches become plastered with droppings, which can severely damage the surrounding herbage (Walpole-Bond 1938). Males often continue to visit their territories outside the breeding season and usually sing during these visits. They are particularly quiet while moulting, although they are not silent then (*contra* Hollom 1975). In winter, song can be heard even when snow lies deep on the ground (e.g. in February in the Crimea: Nicholson 1951). Winter visitors to Egypt sing, at least from January onwards (Witherby *et al.* 1940).

A determined observer, therefore, ought to be able to hear Corn Bunting song every day of the year (although it is not obvious why anyone should want to!). The song has a stereotyped, accelerating rhythm. Abnormalities are rare, although there is some apparent mimicry of Yellowhammers (Richards 1981; Donovan 1984; Stirrup & Eversham 1984). Typically unflattering comments about the song include: 'jangling', 'discordant', 'jarring', 'glass-splintering' and 'like rattling bunch of keys' (SOVON 1987; Cady & Hume 1988; Delin & Svensson 1988; Jonsson 1992; Peterson *et al.* 1993). The song has, however, attracted fans, most notably Hudson (1928), who found it 'a constant pleasure', and a Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* that appeared to imitate it (Wilson 1985). People in Andalusia used to excuse the monotony of the song by explaining that the Corn Bunting was vainly demanding rent payments from the Hoopoe *Upupa epops* (Bannerman 1953).

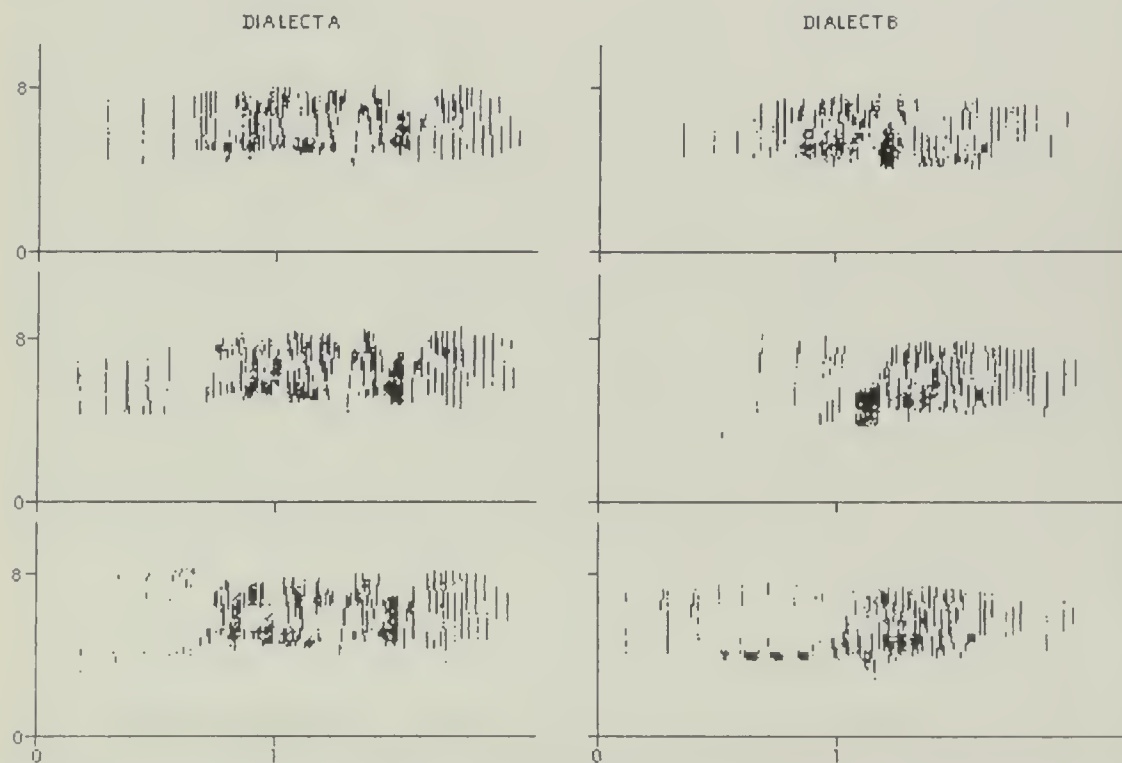


Fig. 2. Sonograms of the three song types in two Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandria* dialects (A and B) on the South Downs. Vertical axis measures frequency in kiloHertz and the horizontal axis is time in seconds.



Fig. 3. Distribution of Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* dialects in part of the South Downs study area in 1986. Each male's dialect is indicated by a capital letter (A to E). Eleven males were not re-recorded and are represented by question marks. Four males sang songs from two dialects and these are indicated (e.g. A+C), as is the one male singing songs that were apparently intermediate between two dialects (A/C). Major roads in the study area are shown (A27, A275 and B2116). The University of Sussex is shown in black and the English Channel by stippling.

Recent research suggests that, whatever its aesthetic appeal, Corn Bunting song is interesting. One reason is that it differs so much from the songs of other buntings in the Western Palearctic. For example, Corn Buntings sing fewer songs per minute, mainly because the intervals between songs are much longer (Catchpole & McGregor 1985). This is typical of polygynous passerines, and it has been suggested that it is the result of their extended song period compared with that of monogamous species, forcing males to expend less energy while

singing (Read & Weary 1992). Male Corn Buntings sing only two or three song types, fewer than other buntings (Read & Weary 1992). A small song repertoire like this is typical of bird species in which males play little part in feeding the chicks. Perhaps, song-repertoire size is correlated with a male's parental abilities (Read & Weary 1992), although it is unclear why this should be so. Although they have few songs in their repertoire, Corn Buntings have more different syllables in each song than do other buntings. This is typical for a polygynous species compared with its monogamous relatives (Read & Weary 1992). A possible reason for the association between within-song complexity and mating system is that females use syllable diversity as a way of assessing potential mates. If so, sexual selection (Krebs & Davies 1993) would favour males singing songs containing many different syllables. The high syllable diversity of Corn Bunting song would then be an acoustic equivalent of the tail of the Peacock *Pavo cristatus*.

A second reason for an interest in Corn Bunting song is the existence of clear-cut local dialects (McGregor 1980, 1991; Pellerin 1981, 1983). These occur because Corn Buntings, like most passerines, learn the details of their song from other males. Chicks reared in acoustic isolation produce a reasonable approximation of normal song (Thorpe 1958), but, in the wild, young males learn from their territorial neighbours (McGregor *et al.* 1988). Each male sings two or three song types which differ during the first half of the song (fig. 2). Playback experiments (McGregor 1986) show that males can distinguish between these song types. Dialect variation occurs in the second half of the song (fig. 2). Again, play-back experiments show that Corn Buntings can detect differences between dialects (Pellerin 1982; McGregor 1983). Males singing the same dialect tend to occur in small clusters (fig. 3). A few males sing song types from two dialects, demonstrating that males can learn from at least two other males. The small number of males singing intermediate songs means that the clusters of males with the same dialect often have sharp boundaries. The boundaries between dialects around White Horse Hill, Oxfordshire, were remarkably stable for eight years, even though no barriers to dispersal could be detected (McGregor & Thompson 1988). Young Corn Buntings of both sexes disperse freely across dialect boundaries, so that dialect clusters do not represent groups of relatives, as suggested by Nottebohm (1969) for Rufous-collared Sparrows *Zonotrichia capensis* in Argentina. On the other hand, female Corn Buntings do not avoid pairing with males singing the same dialect as their father (McGregor *et al.* 1988), so dialects are not a mechanism for preventing inbreeding, as suggested by Jenkins (1978) for Saddlebacks *Creadion carunculatus* on Stewart Island, New Zealand.

Concluding remarks

The Corn Bunting is one of many farmland birds which are declining dramatically in Britain and Ireland (Gibbons *et al.* 1993; Donald *et al.* 1994). In the case of the Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* this decline is well understood (Potts 1986), and considerable progress has been made for some other species, notably Corn Crake *Crex crex* (Stowe *et al.* 1993) and Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (Peach *et al.* 1994). Hopefully, we shall soon understand why the Corn Bunting is decreasing, and also appreciate that Warde-Fowler (1922) underestimated this archetypal 'Little Brown Job'. A 'dull bird', indeed!

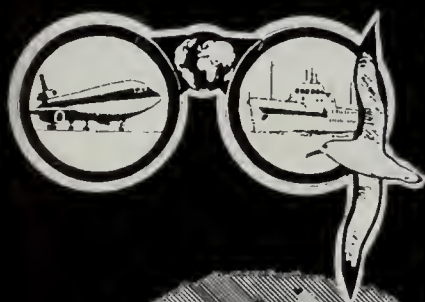
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With a major paper on this species published in *British Birds* as recently as March 1994 (Donald *et al.* 1994), references quoted in both that paper and this paper are not repeated in this list of references; researchers should consult *British Birds* 87: 129-132.

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Dr David Harper, School of Biological Sciences, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 9QG



REQUEST

Hybrid Mediterranean × Black-headed Gulls

Details of accepted records of adult hybrid Mediterranean *Larus melanocephalus* × Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*, detailed descriptions and sketches of such birds and, equally, photographs of them are required for a forthcoming summary paper on the subject. Please send any relevant material to the Identification Notes Panel, c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.



NOTES

Grey Heron capturing hirundine in flight

About 45 minutes before sunset on 16th August 1991, in Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire, a relatively tight flock of about 2,000 hirundines was feeding over open water at a height of between 25 m and 100 m when an adult Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* approached the flock, slowly but directly, and flew straight into it. When well inside the flock, it performed an aerial manoeuvre best described as akin to a duck 'spilling air' when coming in to land. The hirundines had up to this point shown no interest in the heron and were flying within a metre or so of it. The violent movement of the heron brought it almost instantly within striking distance of the hirundines, and it was seen to thrust its head forward from the normal flight position in an attempt to grasp a bird in its bill. Although initially unsuccessful, the heron repeated the performance five or six times, still keeping to its original flight path, and on the final attempt, with a sideways lunge of the head, it succeeded in capturing a hirundine. Although still over the water, it did not descend to attempt to drown and then consume its prey, but continued on the same flight path, disappearing from view over adjacent woodland. There is no reference to similar behaviour by Grey Heron or any other West Palearctic heron in *BWP* (vol. 1), Hancock & Kushlan (1984, *The Herons Handbook*) or Voisin (1991, *The Herons of Europe*).

Mark Keighley and Andrew Hall

64 Highgate Drive, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 9HU

Greylag Goose fledging in company of Oystercatchers

On 28th June 1991, near Uyeasound, Unst, Shetland, J. Burgess and I located a pair of Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* with one large chick just capable of flight. Also associated with this family was a downy young Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, less than two weeks old, which obviously regarded the Oystercatchers as its own parents; when the waders were disturbed and flew as far as the juvenile was capable (about 20 m), the gosling followed urgently on foot. This unusual 'family party' was seen again by other observers and myself on 6th and 8th July, when the association between the gosling and the Oystercatchers was confirmed. The Oystercatchers departed soon afterwards, but the gosling was seen alone, in the same field, on 22nd July, now about three-quarters grown and losing its down. On 7th August, it was caught and ringed; it was in good condition and almost capable of flight (primaries about three-quarters grown). No further sightings were made.

Wild Greylag Geese, presumably of Icelandic stock, have nested on Unst annually since 1985, but, although Greylags breed in the vicinity of these observations, no known breeding attempt was made at the site itself. Young

goslings imprint on the first moving object they see after hatching, but how this one became associated with a pair of Oystercatchers is not known. The explanation that a goose egg was incubated in an Oystercatcher's nest is invalidated by the age difference between the young, the Oystercatcher chick being at least two weeks older. What is also interesting is that from an age of about four weeks the gosling reached near-fledging age without any parental care, either from its own or from foster parents.

M.G. Pennington

9 Daisy Park, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland ZE2 9EA

Interreaction between Montagu's Harrier and Red Fox

In the evening of 24th August 1991, on the Dengie Marshes, Essex, I watched a Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* walk into view across a field over which an adult female Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* was hunting. The harrier ceased hunting and accompanied the fox by flying very low over it and landing about 10 m in front of it; the fox then changed direction by veering away from the bird, but without altering its pace. This behaviour was repeated three times over a period of three or four minutes before the harrier was mobbed and driven off by five Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*. Neither the fox nor the harrier seemed particularly bothered by each other's presence.

John C. Sutherby

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Derek Goodwin has commented: 'Surely the harrier's alighting repeatedly in front of the fox cannot have been a coincidence? And the fact of the fox veering away from the bird suggests that it had some fear of it. I have seen Red Foxes proceed without any hesitation towards Domestic Cats *Felis catus* and Carrion Crows, and both these creatures give way to them.'

Feeding association of Grey Phalarope with Avocet

On 24th November 1991, on a brackish lagoon close to the Atlantic coast near Mbour, Sénégal, several Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* were swimming and upending to feed. One was followed closely by a Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, which swam behind it and frequently picked at the water's surface, presumably taking food items disturbed by the Avocet.

R. E. Youngman

Atholl Bank, Pitlochry, Tayside PH16 5HY

EDITORIAL COMMENT A recent note by David Kramer and Jonathan C. Palmer (*Brit. Birds* 86: 19) described a Grey Phalarope feeding within 5-30 cm of a Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, and once a Common Teal *A. crecca*, and picking surface items disturbed by the ducks' foot and bill actions.

Unusual song of Common Whitethroat

On the morning of 7th June 1989, near his home in Etterby, Carlisle, Cumbria, MT's attention was attracted by an unfamiliar bird song coming from a stretch of narrow, steep, scrubby woodland between a road and the River Eden. The singer remained well hidden in treetop foliage, but after several days it became apparent that it was a Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*. Several other Common Whitethroats in the area all gave entirely normal scratchy songs, but these all kept to low scrub and gorse *Ulex* patches, habitat much more typical of the species. The abnormal song was rather fluty in tone, with something of the pace, length and range of that of a Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*; rather variable, it contained between four and, at best development, six syllables, with a final flourish. MT made a number of tape recordings and transcribed the song as 'tee-dee..tee-dee..tee-dee-oo' with a rising inflection, reminiscent of a Blackcap *S. atricapilla*; the three phrases occupied about two seconds. On a separate occasion, FJR wrote it as 'prrr-TEE..prrrtee..prrii', with the accent on the second syllable.

The Whitethroat spent the summer in the area, and as time passed its song gradually changed, becoming less musical and more grating in tone, especially in the last phrase, and more rapid, the total song now lasting only 1.5 seconds. Interestingly, and as with some 'normal' Common Whitethroats, it also became more mimetic, especially in song flights: for example, on 6th July, MT heard recognisable phrases such as Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* call and Blackbird *Turdus merula* alarm.

In the following spring, in an area of bushes about 400 m from the 1989 site, MT found a Common Whitethroat giving a less extreme version of the aberrant song, but it was unclear whether this was the same or another individual. No unusual songs were heard in 1991.

Eric Simms (1985, *British Warblers*) mentioned only three cases of aberrant song by Common Whitethroat. The description closest to the Carlisle individual's repertoire is from R. A. Frost (*Brit. Birds* 61: 468): 'an unfamiliar, fluty song . . . surprisingly powerful and thrush-like. The first three notes were at the same pitch, followed by two pairs of up-and-down notes.' Whether the aberrant songs represent inherent patterns or learned phrases from other species seems uncertain.

M. Tulloch and F. J. Roberts

13 Riverbank Court, Carlisle CA3 9PQ

EDITORIAL COMMENT An aberrantly singing Common Whitethroat in Oxfordshire in May 1962 (*Brit. Birds* 57: 204-205) shared other characteristics with this Cumbrian individual, also singing mainly from a height of 20-40 feet (6-12 m) in tall trees, and the song gradually becoming more similar to the species' normal song, though still distinguishable even by mid August.



REVIEWS

The Birds of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

By Ian J. Andrews.

I. J. Andrews, Musselburgh, 1995. 185 pages; 32 colour plates; 85 black-and-white illustrations; 17 maps. ISBN 0-9524978-0-8. Paperback £18.50.

This is an excellent book and long overdue, Jordan being one of the main avifaunal gaps for students of Middle East ornithology. It is well researched, clearly presented and attractively illustrated with both line-drawings and colour photographs. But it is not a field guide, nor does it pretend to be. It simply presents the status and distribution of the birds of the Kingdom back to the time when Canon Tristram first roamed the deserts, the mountains and the Jordan Valley in the later half of the last century.

Whilst the systematic list forms the bulk of the book, there are other useful sections on climate, geology, vegetation and avifaunal regions, as well as a pretty comprehensive birdwatching-sites guide. I hope King Hussein, when reflecting on the section on Conservation and Environmental Threats, remembers the words of his eloquent Foreword: 'With this book, another step has been taken to ensure that the treasures of today will be preserved for the generations of tomorrow.' Urgent action is needed to control hunting, the taking of birds of prey, and the excesses of over-grazing; and Azraq must be re-flooded.

For each of the 374 species (these can, I

feel, now be regarded as the 'official' Jordan list), there is a bar-diagram for all migrants showing times and strength of passage, clear maps for all the 150 or so breeders, and a short text giving status and historical changes. The author is at pains to point out that much more work needs to be done before the true distribution of breeding birds is known.

I have virtually no criticisms of this book. Eyebrows may be raised at the transliterated (into English) Arabic bird names, but as such they are more helpful for the foreign birder. Statements in the status sections are not referenced (but there is a good bibliography); whilst this would have made for unnecessary extra baggage for the bulk of the species, it would have been helpful for the more unusual observations. Who did see the Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* at Azraq in May 1965, or the flock of Bridled Terns *Sterna anaethetus* in the Gulf of Aqaba in August 1991?

Ian Andrews acknowledges being influenced by Colin Richardson's *Birds of the United Arab Emirates* (1990) in determining the format for the book. He made a wise decision—it is a formula that works well.

Richard Porter

Waders.

By Nicholas Hammond & Bruce Pearson.

Hamlyn, London, 1994. 65 colour plates; numerous black-and-white illustrations; 3 maps. ISBN 0-600-57974-3. £14.99.

This little book—175 pages in octavo format—reviews the life-style of waders, discussing migration, cold-weather movements, feeding, flocking and roosting, plumage, moult and comfort behaviour and breeding. Each chapter provides a useful general introduction, and the book concludes with a gazetteer of Western Palearctic wader sites.

A major delight is the numerous

illustrations by Bruce Pearson, who elegantly catches the jizz of the waders he portrays. I particularly admired a picture of a Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* delicately picking blackberries.

In summary, a charming book, informative, well written and delightfully illustrated.

R. J. Chandler



THE CARL ZEISS AWARD



The purpose of this annual award, presented by *Carl Zeiss Ltd*, is to encourage the submission of photographs (transparencies or prints) to assist the British Birds Rarities Committee in its assessment of records. The winner receives his or her choice of Zeiss binoculars, which are presented at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water. *Carl Zeiss Ltd* also presents the runners-up, and all those whose photographs or documentary drawings of rarities are published in *British Birds*, with a voucher for a six-month subscription to the journal.

This year's short list was as follows:

F. Golding for Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* in flight in Sunderland, Tyne & Wear, on 5th March 1994.

A. Greensmith for a portrait shot of Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* at Beddington Sewage-farm, Greater London, on 24th August 1993.

C. Sharp for Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* in flight, showing underwing, at Seaton Snook, Cleveland, on 6th November 1994.

J. Szczur for in-the-hand photographs of Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* at Holme Pierrepont, Nottinghamshire, in December/January 1994/95.

After considerable discussion of the relative merits of the individual photographs in respect of record assessment and the depiction of identification features, and of in-the-field compared with in-the-hand photographs, the judges agreed that the Spotted Sandpiper photographs (a set of seven, of which two are shown here, plates 121 & 122 on page 428) fully merited first prize, so the winner of The Carl Zeiss Award 1995 is John Szczur.

The photographs of the Spotted Sandpiper were obtained in great haste, so as to cause the bird no discomfort, but John Szczur had trapped Common Sandpipers *A. hypoleucos* at the same site earlier in the year, so was able to concentrate on photographing the salient identification points with seven quick shots.

R. A. Hume and J. T. R. Sharrock

Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3N7

Carl Zeiss supports County Bird Recording network

For the past seven years, each of the 81 County Bird Recorders in the United Kingdom has received a free annual subscription to *British Birds* in appreciation for the hard work which they contribute to British ornithology in their 'free time'.

In 1994, *Carl Zeiss Ltd*, sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee, joined *British Birds* in a partnership to make this annual gesture of appreciation.

Carl Zeiss and *British Birds* both wish to demonstrate publicly their support for the county bird-recording network, run by the county and regional bird clubs and societies, which leads to the collation and publication of carefully assessed, reliable records in the county and regional bird reports. These reports are the essential backbone to British ornithology, and the envy of ornithologists in other countries. Their close links and long-standing co-operation with the BBRC make this *British Birds*-*Carl Zeiss* joint annual gift especially appropriate.



Plates 121 & 122. WINNER OF 'THE CARL ZEISS AWARD' 1995: Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, Holme Pierrepont, Nottinghamshire, 28th December 1994 (J. Szczur)





PHOTOSPOT

37. Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

Back in 1966, separating Long-billed from Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus* was not well understood and this bird generated a good deal of heat—not only in Cornwall. It was while trying to get decent shots of this individual that we became attracted to ‘stalking’ as a means of obtaining photographs, as we found that, *eventually*, we could get within a few feet of it. In 1966, ‘twitching’ was not really known and we could roam wherever we wanted on the estuary. In those times, we knew many birdwatchers and nearly all bird-photographers (there were no others in Cornwall), and the former would often go out of their way to help us to get shots. Happy Days!

We have always been conscious of the fact that our subsequent success as freelance nature photographers was started by the ‘advertisement’ which James Ferguson-Lees gave us in *British Birds*.

J. B. & S. Bottomley

Chypons, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 5BU

EDITORIAL COMMENT We draw readers’ attention to the item in ‘News and comment’ at the top of page 440. Plate 123 is the two-hundredth photograph by J. B. & S. Bottomley to be published in *British Birds*.



Plate 123. Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, Hayle, Cornwall, 16th December 1966 (*Brit. Birds* 60: 317; 61: 339-340) (J. B. & S. Bottomley)



FROM THE RARITIES COMMITTEE'S FILES



Two reports, selected for this feature as examples of high-quality submissions, coincidentally concerned the same species: Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*. One relates primarily to in-the-hand examination and the other to field observations. Both are given here in full, with only very minor subeditorial changes.

The BBRC congratulates Stephen Votier and Andrew Moon on the excellence of the following accounts. (We have taken this opportunity also to include relevant photographs by Robin Chittenden and K. B. Shepherd, and drawings by Peter A. Dennis.)

Lanceolated Warbler in Norfolk

SPECIES Lanceolated Warbler. AGE First-winter.

PLACE Sheringham, Norfolk.

DATE 29th September 1993; 07.50-18.45 — intermittently; total duration 50 minutes.

OBSERVER Stephen C. Votier.

FIRST FOUND BY D. Riley, K. B. Shepherd. FIRST IDENTIFIED BY SCV. OTHER OBSERVERS About 500 visiting birders.

OPTICAL AIDS Habicht 10 × 40.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF SPECIES None.

EXPERIENCE OF SIMILAR SPECIES Seen about 30 Grasshopper Warblers and handled about 40.

DISTANCE In hand and down to ranges of 5 feet (1.5 m) in field.

SPECIES PRESENT FOR COMPARISON ALONGSIDE None.

RINGED BY SCV. RING NUMBER OF0454.

WEATHER Wind SE2. Cloud 6/10. Light conditions: diffuse sun. Angle of sun to observer: not constant, but generally behind.

The morning of 29th September dawned with overcast skies; a cool southeasterly breeze and the definite smell of rare birds! I arrived at Dead Man's Wood just before dawn, and met up with KBS, who had just finished erecting mist-nets in the small coastal wood. We both wandered down to the sea, where we met up with DR, a visiting ringer from the Northwest who had popped in to 'check out' the local patch that I had bored him about on many an occasion.

We all stood seawatching for a while, noting a nice passage of Little Gulls *Larus minutus*, and commenting on the apparently arriving or arrived Goldcrests *Regulus regulus* that we could hear calling away from the wood and nearby hedges. KBS and DR then wandered back up to the wood to do the first net round. After they had been gone for a while, I noticed a familiar shape come bounding along the cliff-top: a Hoopoe *Upupa epops*. The bird had arrived on the cliff-top late the previous night, but had rapidly moved off, and we naturally assumed it had gone. However, it took up residence on the cliff-top, feeding around two of our cliff-top net sites—where it looked easily catchable. So I dashed up to the ringing hut in the wood to get the necessary nets, and also to tell DR of the bird's reappearance since he had not seen it.

My arrival back at the ringing hut coincided with that of KBS and DR, complete with large numbers of birds: there had clearly been an overnight or

dawn arrival. As I messed around getting the nets together, KBS and DR began ringing away and KBS calmly asked me if I wanted to see a Grasshopper Warbler that DR had just extracted from the bottom shelf of a mist-net on the most northerly fringe of the wood. I was keen to see the bird, and as he passed it to me DR said, in a slightly shaky voice, 'I think it's a bit small!'. As I pulled the bird out of the bag, I could scarcely believe my eyes; it was clearly a very small streaked *Locustella*, and was it ever streaked!! I looked firstly at the tertials, then the undertail-coverts, upperparts and the breast and underparts: I could see no reason why this bird was not Norfolk's first Lanceolated Warbler.

The next 15 minutes were some of the most stressful of my life. Only five days earlier, KBS and I had totally cocked up another first for Norfolk, the Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, so the pressure to get the ID totally spot on was enormous. So, armed with pen, paper, ruler, 'Svensson' and 'Lewington *et al.*', we sealed the bird's fate. There was also the added pressure to do the whole procedure quickly, so as to reduce the handling time. After a total of about 20 minutes, the bird was photographed and then released about 200 m away in a grassy cliff-top ravine, and then the news released.

The bird was not released into the wood, simply because it would probably never have been seen again. Fortunately, it remained on the cliff-top for the remainder of the day, where, amazingly, virtually everybody who came got excellent views of this 'massive skulker'.

Views in the field varied from hurried flight views, to perching on open cliff, inches away in bushes and even the obligatory moving between birders' legs. The bird was seen to go to roost that night, but, after a very clear night, was totally absent the following day.

Description

The following description consists of the detailed description in the hand and notes from field observations.

BIOMETRICS

Weight 11.7 g. Wing (maximum chord) 56 mm (both left and right wings). Tail 46.5 mm. Head & Bill 30.0 mm. Maximum tarsus 21.2 mm. Bill width (proximal nostril) 3.50 mm. Bill to skull 13.85 mm.

WING FORMULA

Emarginated 3rd. Wing point 3rd. Notch on second primary 6.55 mm. Position of secondaries relative to primaries = 4th. Length of first primary = longest primary covert.

The following description was that made in the hand; and concentrates purely on plumage.

UPPERPARTS Forehead and crown greyish olive-brown with broad matt-black centres to all feathers. Most narrow on the forehead, and broadest on the mid-crown. Black centres, although varying in width, all showed the black reaching the tip of each feather, thus produced bold and well-defined streaking.

Nape similarly greyish olive-brown, also with matt-black centres, although black *not* reaching the tip of each feather and therefore appearing far less heavily streaked than the crown.

Mantle and scapulars same colour as the

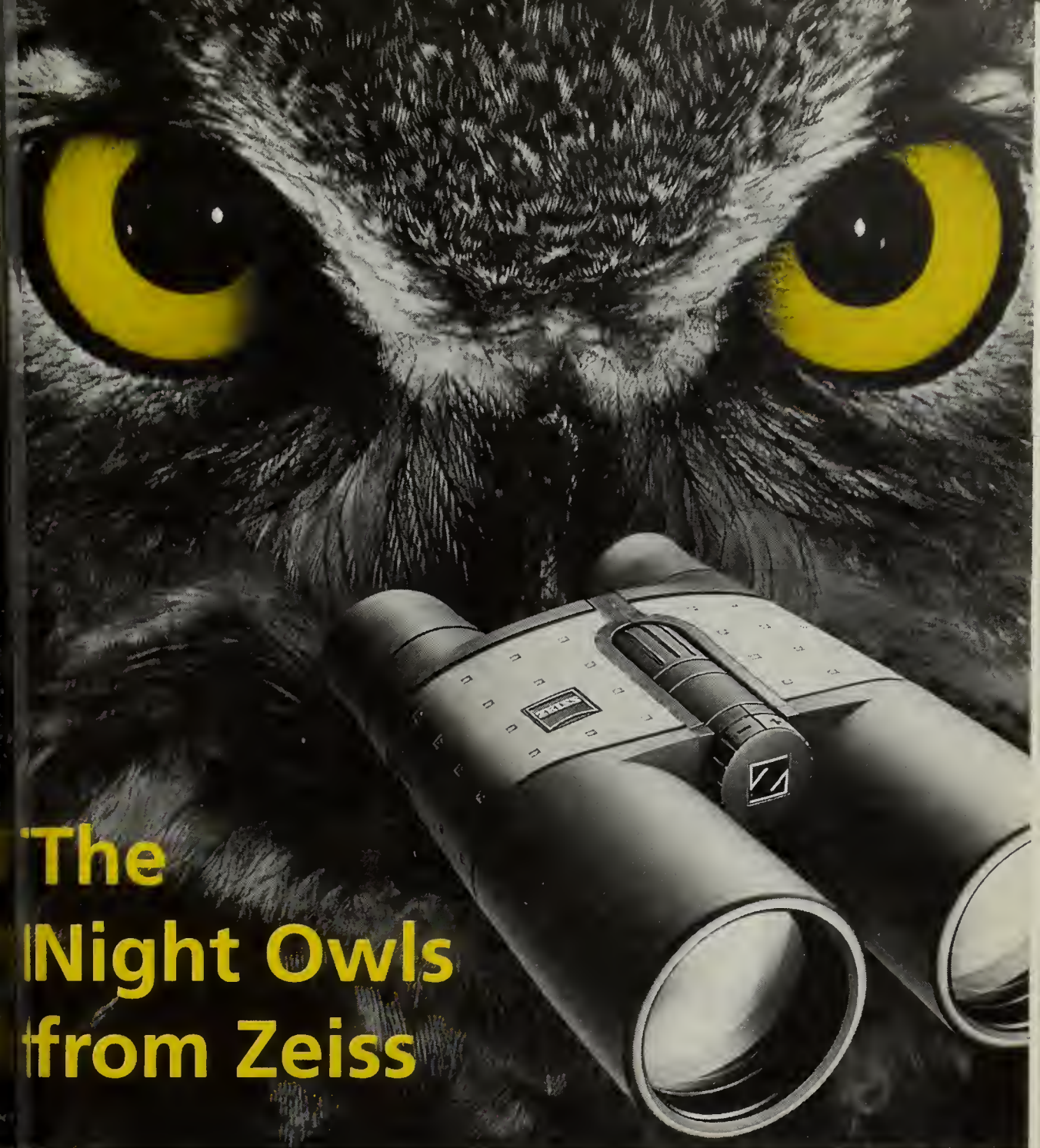
crown and nape, and also showed prominent matt-black/dark-grey centres to all of the feathers. The mantle and scapular feathers varied somewhat in the exact patterning of the dark centres, some feathers showing the dark reaching the tip of the feather, whereas other feathers showed a narrow buff tip to each. The effect was to create rows of virtually unbroken, thick blackish streaking down the mantle. The scapular feathers tended to show the broadest buff (olive) tips, hence reducing the effect of streaking there (fig. 1).



ZEISS

Plates 124 & 125. Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, Norfolk, 29th September 1993 (above, K. B. Shepherd; below, Robin Chittenden). The inclusion of plates 124 & 125 was subsidised by Carl Zeiss Ltd, sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee.





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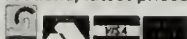
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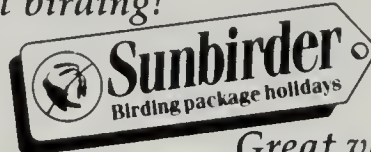
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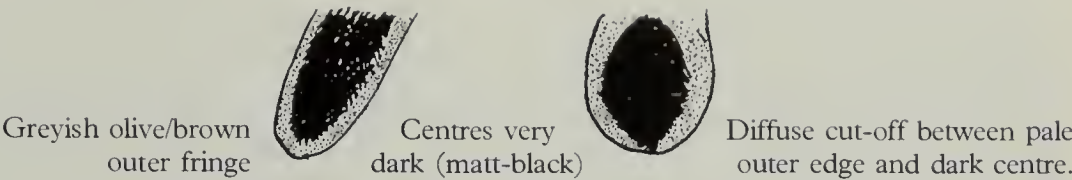


Fig. 1. Variation in mantle/scapular patterning.

Rump and uppertail-coverts were patterned similarly, again showing greyish olive/brown ground colour with dark feather centres. The central feathers showed black virtually reaching the tip of each feather, the side uppertail-coverts had more reduced black centres, not reaching the tip of the feathers.

Tail quite long and rounded, although individual feathers appearing quite pointed; mid/dark brown in colour with a greyish cast. Tips and outer webs fractionally paler.

WINGS Primaries and secondaries basically dark grey with paler, brown fringes. Second primary showed outer web much paler, almost whitish. Primary projection beyond the tertials very short, not measured, but equal to about one quarter of the length of the exposed tertials.

Greater and median coverts brownish with a grey cast with well-defined dark-grey/matt-black centres.

Tertials very well marked (summarised in fig. 2).



Buff/pale, broader on outer web than inner

SHORTEST Very dark brown, almost matt-black centres, contrasting very well with sharply cut-off buff/white surround.



Note in-cut of dark on the inner web

Really dark centres

MIDDLE Again, very dark (blackish) centres, contrasting sharply with buffy-white surround. Showed a distinct, but restricted in-cut, on the dark of the tip of the inner web. Pale surround quite narrow, although most narrow on the outer web.



Pale surround very obvious

Becoming whiter (from buff) towards tip

LONGEST As the other tertials, although the in-cut on the inner web not so apparent. Also showed well-demarcated buff outer contrasting with dark centre, but buff becoming whiter towards tip of feather, therefore enhancing the effect of contrast.

Fig. 2. Examples of three tertials.

IN SUMMARY All tertials showing very distinct and sharp contrast between dark grey/brown to matt-black centres, and pale buff outer edge. When the base of each tertial was looked at closely, it revealed that the cut-off point between the dark and pale was more diffuse than on the rest of the feather, and therefore more like a typical tertial shown by Grasshopper Warbler.

UNDERPARTS Chin buff. Lores, ear-coverts and supercilium all olive/brown, with lores and eye-stripe behind the eye slightly darker grey, producing the effect of a paler supercilium, also accentuated by dark crown-streaking.

The whole of the throat and upper breast essentially buff-white, with a slight yellowish cast, finely but distinctly streaked, forming a neat and well-marked gorget of streaking extending as far as level with the fold in the wing. Streaking at its finest on the throat,

becoming bolder on the upper breast.

The rest of the underparts were buff/white with a very faint yellow cast (certainly much less so than on the 'usual' Grasshopper Warblers that I have seen). The flank feathers were clearly- very fluffy, retained juvenile feathers (apparently some 'Lanceys' suspend moult before they complete the post-juvenile moult) washed grey and with more than eight feathers showing long, diffuse streaks to the centres on lower flanks.

Belly buff, with the most extensive amount of yellow.

UNDERTAIL-COVERTS The whole of the undertail-coverts were washed buff-brown, with the individual feathers variously streaked very dark grey/brown. The four main types are shown in fig. 3 (each feather was examined *carefully* to the base).



SHORTEST

Dark clearly *not* reaching base of the feather



SIDE

Well-demarcated 'spot'



MIDDLE

Faint dark smudge



LONGEST

Quite extensive dark streak, although never reaching base of feather. Each feather showed a paler buff/white tip, contrasting with brownish base

Fig. 3. Undertail-coverts.

UNDERWING-COVERTS Washed pale buffy brown.

BARE PARTS Bill quite stout. Upper mandible dark grey with pale cutting edge. Lower mandible orangey-pink with a pale grey smudge towards the tip. Gape flanges quite

apparent, being yellow. Eye quite large and beady-looking (because of plain face?), iris dull grey-brown and pupil black.

Legs and feet quite big-looking (in proportion to the bird) and bright pink. Claws pale.

Views in the field clearly offered no more plumage details than those shown in the hand, although it afforded an opportunity to see structural features and also those plumage features most readily viewable in the field.

Jizz and structure

Clearly a *Locustella*, with fairly short wings and long broad tail often trailing behind in flight. On the deck, a fairly flat-backed bird with long legs, definitely adept at running about at some speed, and apparently reluctant to fly at times. Compared with Grasshopper Warbler, it looked tiny, the size of a Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, but with perhaps a longer tail and shorter wings, although these differences in size seemed less obvious to me than several people suggested.

Plumage features

Although excellent views were obtained in the field, many features required even better views; the ones most visible and useful appeared to be (in rough order of relevance):

1. Throat-streaking and breast-streaking forming neat gorget, flank-streaking not readily visible in the field.
2. Tertian-patterning apparent even at some range.
3. Crown-streaking very well defined and easy to see.
4. Mantle-streaking seen well on the very best views, but clearly no exact feather detail.
5. Coloration: I'm not 100% certain how reliable this is, and how it compares to 'Eastern Groppers' especially, but I have not seen such a 'grey/brown-and-white' Gropper before, they have always been more olive-and-yellow.

Note that, despite some pretty amazing prolonged views in the field, the bird was not about to show off its lovely undertail-coverts.

Stephen C. Votier

Morden House, 20 Cliff Avenue, Cromer, Norfolk NR27 0AN

Lanceolated Warbler in Shetland

SPECIES Lanceolated Warbler. AGE First-winter.

LOCALITY Sumburgh Head, Shetland.

DATE 27th September 1993, observed 16.00 hrs to 18.00 hrs, but present until dusk.

FOUND BY P. A. Dennis. IDENTIFIED BY A. V. Moon. OTHER OBSERVERS Steve Webb and Colin Stephens initially, then Paul Harvey, Hugh Harrop, John Clifton, Chris Donald, Bob Proctor and about 30 others.

WEATHER Wind SW 1-2. No cloud; bright sunshine (but, after the initial sighting, all the closest views were in shadow alongside a wall).

OPTICAL AIDS Leica Trinovid 10 × 42 BA; Questar at c. 80 × (AVM); Bausch and Lomb Elite 10 × 42; Kowa TSN4 20 × 60 (PAD).

EXPERIENCE Third individual seen in Britain, previous ones seen in 1982 and 1990 on Fair Isle; also 10-15 seen in winter in Thailand (1978/79 and 1981/82) (AVM); one individual seen before in Britain on Fair Isle in 1989 (PAD).

DISTANCE Down to six feet (2 m) or closer—it almost ran over PAD's feet.

Despite the deluges and floods in England and elsewhere, Shetland generally defied all expectations, producing many sunny and still, even warm days. September 27th was just one of those days, without a cloud in the sky and hardly a breath of wind; however, despite thorough searching of the southern tip of the

Shetland mainland, we had hardly come up with any new birds—only a Merlin *Falco columbarius* as well as several Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* and Redwings *T. iliacus*, with not a single warbler to be seen. A conversation with Paul Harvey on a previously still and rather birdless day produced the comment that often the best birds on Fair Isle arrived on sunny days with light southwesterlies . . . so we could not afford to give up just yet.

Early-afternoon news from Fair Isle produced just the inspiration we were looking for: a Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* had been found, there must be *something* around. However, a long delay followed in the early afternoon as enthusiasts tried to get over to FI for the Pechora. Following a late lunch, it was mid afternoon before we re-entered the field. After checking several sites in the Sumburgh area, we eventually decided to head up to Sumburgh Head; as expected, there appeared to be virtually no new arrivals. We then headed down from the lighthouse to check the lower walls; it was at about 16.00 hrs when I noticed Pete Dennis intently watching something, but I could not see any bird so I assumed it must be out of my line of sight. I decided to walk slowly towards him to see what he was watching. As I was doing so, he looked up and beckoned me over; I slowly walked towards him in a large arc to avoid disturbing the object of his attentions. When I reached his side, he said he had a *Locustella* which was definitely not a Pallas's Grasshopper *L. certhiola*. I soon picked up the bird in question as it ran away from us on the grass at the base of the wall—it was a small *Locustella* and very active, and after a few seconds it dived into the stone wall. I said to PAD that it was essential to get good views of the tertials and undertail-coverts to establish its identity. Fears that it might have gone right through the wall proved groundless, as it suddenly appeared in the wall only 15 m away, giving excellent views of everything except its tail; it remained motionless in this position for a few seconds as it looked around nervously, allowing us good views through binoculars.

The combination of a rather plain face, fine streaking on the throat and breast, which was strongly suffused with pale yellow, and the neat, dark-centred tertials with thin pale buff fringes could belong to only one species. I said to PAD, 'It's a ***** Lancey!' We continued to watch it as it dropped down onto the grass, alongside the edge of the wall, and slowly scuttled away from us. By this time, Steve Webb was moving towards us, having noticed our concentrated observations, and asked what we were watching—I told him we had a Lanceolated Warbler. He soon joined us, but the bird then immediately dived behind another wall that ran at right angles to the first wall. Over the next hour or so, it gave frustratingly poor views as, by now, four of us gently followed it around the walls. On one occasion, it flew right away from the walls and we feared that we were about to lose it; on other occasions it went straight through the stone walls, emerging on the other side, necessitating long detours to get more views; during this time it was often out of view for 5-10 minutes.

During this period, I never managed to see the undertail-coverts very well (although they always looked virtually unmarked). I was particularly keen to see these well so as to be absolutely sure about the identification before releasing the news. On some occasions, particularly in bright sunlight, it seemed larger, longer-billed and much less dark brown than it had done originally, provoking fears that it might not be a Lanceolated after all. Nevertheless, at other times it looked

reassuringly small, dark brown and those tertials were undeniable. I decided at this stage, although not 100% sure of its identity, that, with only two hours of daylight left, it was sensible to get other birders onto the scene. I phoned several people, including John Clifton, Paul Harvey and Hugh Harrop, to let them know that we had a probable Lanceolated Warbler on Sumburgh Head.

Ironically it was quite by chance that we stumbled on the best way to view the bird before anyone else had arrived; it was by now moving up a long stretch of stone wall, with no right-angle sections to divert it, and with several observers at the bottom of the wall and the rest at the top, it proceeded to feed quite happily on the grass alongside the wall between the two groups of birders. When it reached one group it would turn around and head back the other way, frequently giving views down to six feet (2 m) or less (quite stunning through the Questar!). It proved to be a typically confiding individual, which eventually displayed its undertail-coverts to all and sundry. In retrospect, the undertail-coverts were sufficiently buff and plain to provide adequate confirmation of its identity quite early on, since the very fine pin-like streaking on each feather (except the longest two) was very indistinct, except on the closest views.

The bird stayed in the same area until dusk and was watched by 30-40 birders, including Paul Harvey, Hugh Harrop, Chris Donald and John Clifton. It was not present the next day.

Description

SIZE, STRUCTURE AND BEHAVIOUR No direct comparison with any other bird, but distinctly smaller than nearby Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* and very much slimmer. At times, it

held its tail slightly cocked, with the wings drooped, giving it an appearance rather like a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*; in flight, the short wings accentuated this impression. The shape

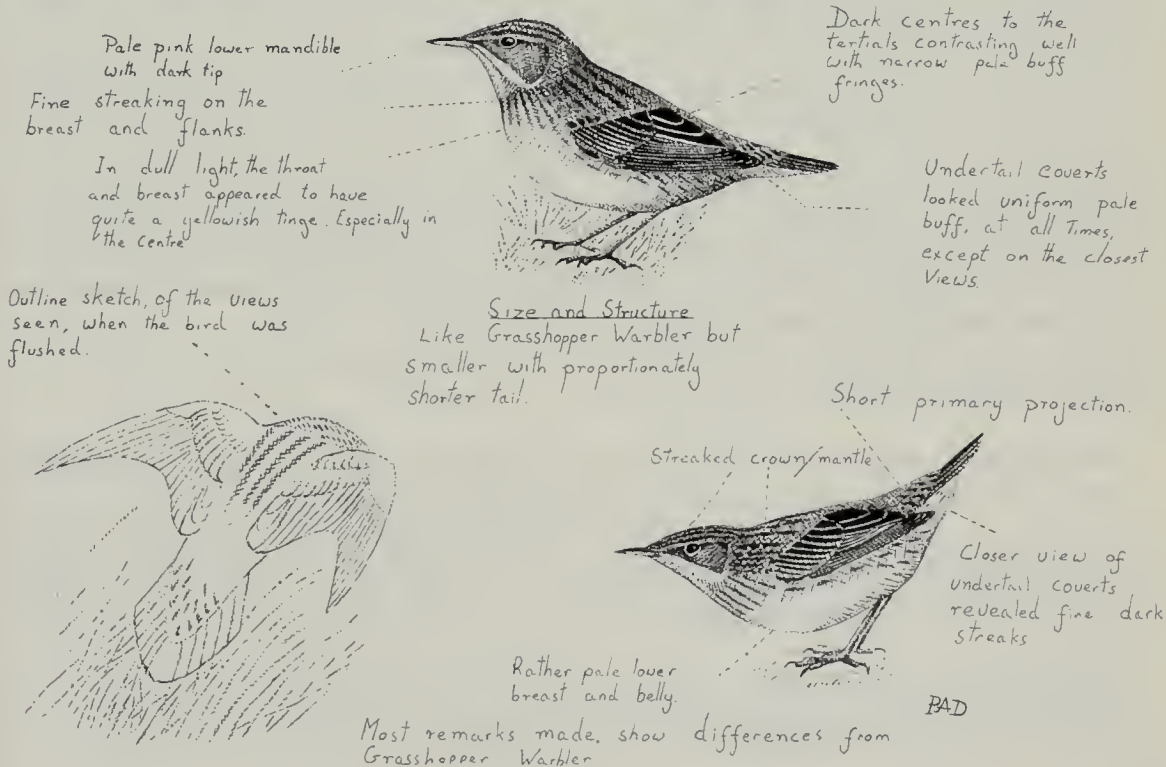


Fig. 1. Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, Sumburgh Head, Shetland, 27th September 1993 (Peter A. Dennis)

was typical *Locustella* with its severely graduated tail, not to mention its mouse-like behaviour, as well as a very flat crown with virtually no forehead. Its actual structure was incredibly variable: when perched in the wall it was very compact and rather rotund, when alarmed it would stretch itself out and stick its head up giving it a much longer profile, when it was feeding on the grass it seemed for all the world like a small rodent running, even bounding, along with a typical horizontal stance. It was particularly adept at disappearing into thick clumps of grass. Although confiding given still observers, it was easily alarmed by movement and would run for 20-30 m before stopping to look around. More often than not, its normal feeding behaviour could be described as furtive and unobtrusive. Interestingly, a Grasshopper Warbler *L. naevia* seen very well in long grass a week or so later gave a profile of an *Acrocephalus* as it perched up on the grass stem with its tail cocked; by way of comparison with the Lanceolated, its tail was noticeably longer, the tertial pattern was still quite striking, but the fringes were distinctly wider and washed with grey and they formed a much less striking contrast to the rest of the closed wing. More critically, the undertail-coverts were definitely brown, not buff, and noticeably streaked.

UPPERPARTS Overall a rather rich brown tone to the plumage. Head: the face was rather plain with an indistinct yellowish supercilium from the base of the bill to just beyond the eye; the latter was dark with a fine, but quite obvious, pale eye-ring. Ear-coverts rather grey-brown, very lightly streaked darker, bordered above by a faintly darker eye-line and below by a thin rather yellowish submoustachial line with a dark malar stripe (see underparts). Bill: quite long for a Lanceolated, dark culmen, but rest of bill including cutting edge of upper mandible pale flesh-pink. Distinctly streaked crown, the

streaks forming a series of dark brown lines. At times, it revealed a greyish 'shawl' on the hindneck, but this was very dependent on neck posture and was not always obvious. The mantle was dominated by a series of bold dark tramlines, becoming less striking on the lower back. The uppertail-coverts, and to a lesser extent the rump, were boldly streaked dark brown, each feather having a dark central band on either side of the feather shaft (most striking on the longest pair of feathers), but stopping subterminally. The closed wing was rather club-shaped. The greater coverts and tertials were incredibly neat, with dark brown feather centres and thin, uniform, pale buff fringes, forming a strong contrast with the less richly coloured primaries. The primary tips fell well short of the tips of the uppertail-coverts and the exposed primary tips formed only one-third to one-half the length of the exposed tertials. The uppertail was dark brown, darker than the rest of the upperparts and markedly graduated (this was even obvious without the tail being fanned open).

UNDERPARTS Overall rather dirty greyish-white, but throat and breast strongly suffused with yellow (more obvious at certain angles and particularly in the centre of the throat and breast) and flanks, vent and undertail strongly suffused with buff. Throat and breast finely streaked dark brown, the streaking finest on throat, becoming wider and more striking on breast (the centre of throat was unstreaked and bordered by a dark malar stripe on each side and streaking below); this streaking continued along the flanks and vent, forming several lines on the flanks. Lower breast and belly was unstreaked. Undertail-coverts: two longest unstreaked (seen only at very close range), rest were unmarked except for a thin dark brown line (short-pin-shaped) in the centre of each feather.

LEGS Rather livid pink.

Identified as Lanceolated Warbler (all comparisons with Grasshopper Warbler) on small size, proportionately shorter tail, proportionately shorter primaries (only one-third to one-half length of exposed tertials, compared with nearly equal length in Grasshopper), extensive streaking on underparts, bold, and strongly contrasting, greater coverts and tertials and scarcely streaked buff undertail-coverts.

Identified as presumed first-winter on richness of plumage tones, as well as the evident freshness of the plumage and particularly the absence of apparent feather wear.

Andrew V. Moon

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NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Too many chemicals, too few Swallows

It is not often that the members of the 'N & c' team take the unusual step of giving themselves a pat on the back. Just occasionally we feel we deserve it. Under the heading 'Chemicals and the environment' (*Brit. Birds* 88: 247), we expressed the opinion that the profile of chemicals and their presence in the environment needed raising. Since that piece was penned, the profile has certainly started to rise.

A full-page article by Robin Page (*Weekend Telegraph* April 15th 1995), under the heading 'Why the threat of a silent summer hangs over our green but poisoned land', was followed by Geoffrey Lean, environment correspondent for the *Independent on Sunday*, writing on 'The sacred swallow, summer's missing guest' (June 11th 1995). Both articles wrote of Ivermectin, Aldicarb and a range of other biocides being liberally added to the British countryside. (Appositely, the letter page of the same issue of the *Independent on Sunday* has the heading 'While scientists look for proof, people are being poisoned', although the subject is different!). Robin Page has subsequently followed this up with the launch of a campaign in *Country Living* (July 1995), 'Save our Swallows', stressing the alternatives that are available for some of the most damaging chemicals.

It would be easy to get side-tracked by criticism of a particular chemical, but it is the vast array of herbicides, insecticides, molluscicides and fungicides that are used in modern-day farming and gardening that is the worry. The Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* makes an excellent flagship for any action, with the loss of over half a million in the last 25 years. In some areas, the decline has been so dramatic that we hear stories of complete absence. It must now be time for a conservation body with political clout to take up what appears to be a very challenging campaign.

Bird Conservation: the science and the action

Proceedings of the landmark BOU/RSPB/JNCC/WWT/BTO conference held at Shuttleworth College during 6th-10th April 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 344, 404) have now been published as a 250-page supplement to *Ibis*. Copies are available (price £20.00 incl. p&p) from the BOU, c/o Natural History Museum, Akeman Street, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP.

Netting at Ngulia

Mist-netting during the 'small-moon periods' in November-December was again productive at Ngulia, Kenya, with 10,954 Palearctic migrants ringed in 1994 (the fourth-highest annual total, exceeded only in 1979, 1990 and 1993). As usual, Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* predominated, with almost 6,000 ringed, including a record 1,104 on 5th December. (Contributed by Graeme Backhurst & David Pearson, Box 15194, Nairobi, Kenya)

New Honorary Subscribers

We are delighted to announce that Brian & Sheila Bottomley have been elected as Honorary Subscribers to *British Birds*.

The credit 'J. B. & S. Bottomley' has appeared under no fewer than 199 photographs in *British Birds*, mostly during the three decades of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The first photograph by either member of this husband-and-wife team ever to be published was in *British Birds* in 1957, and it gives us great pleasure now to include the two-hundredth in this journal (plate 123 on page 429).

Neither Brian nor Sheila had done any real photography or developed a film prior to their marriage in 1955, but after only four years they were elected to membership of the Zoological Photographic Club and were awarded the Medal of the Royal Photographic Society in 1961. Eric Hosking and I. J. Ferguson-Lees, writing in 1964, described them as having 'risen to the very forefront of bird-photographers' (*Brit. Birds* 57: 501-502). At first they concentrated on nest-

photography and some 'wait-and-see' photography from hides at bait, but then pioneered bird-photography by stalking, described and illustrated in *British Birds* (61: 546-549). This inspired a generation, and revolutionised wader-photography, providing us with many classic images (see e.g. *Brit. Birds* 70: 521-529).

It is our pleasure to honour two ornithologists whose contributions have had such a significant influence on their successors. Their letter of acceptance ended with the typically generous invitation 'to any who remember us to call for tea and/or gin, should they be "rained off" while in West Cornwall.' The address is Chypons, Chywoone Hill, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 5BU.

Brian & Sheila Bottomley join I. J. Ferguson-Lees, P. A. D. Hollom, Guy Mountfort, E. M. Nicholson, Roger Tory Peterson, Major R. F. Ruttledge, Dr P. O. Swanberg, Prof. Dr K. H. Voous and D. I. M. Wallace as Honorary Subscribers to *British Birds*. (Eds.)

Volunteers wanted in Sulawesi

Would you like to spend eight days in the forests and mountains of Buton, a remote island off the southeast coast of Sulawesi, Indonesia? This is home to some exceptionally rare species, including Sulawesi Serpent Eagle *Spilornis rufipectus*, Lilac-cheeked Kingfisher *Cittura cyanotis* and Purple-bearded Bee-eater *Meropogon forsteri*. After penetrating some of the remotest parts of the island to gather a range of biological information, it would be time to move to the Tukanghesi Islands for a period of snorkelling among the coral reefs and lazing on white sand beaches.

The entire programme is sponsored by the Hongkong Bank under its 'Care-for-Nature' programme. So, what is the catch? It is necessary to have a strong interest in birds and a willingness to live under expedition conditions, staying in local villages and eating local food. The programme is funded, but participants would be required to meet their personal costs, which amount to some £1,800 if starting from the UK. Further details from Operation Wallacea, c/o Ecosurveys Ltd, Priory Lodge, Hagnaby, Spilsby, Lincolnshire PE23 4BP.

Irish losses and gains

Corn Crakes *Crex crex* failed to nest in Northern Ireland for the first time ever in 1994, and, although there was some optimism from the Republic of Ireland in that year, the species is again absent from the north in 1995. Now joining it as a lost breeding species in Northern Ireland in 1995 is the Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*, although the first news from the 1995 survey is that the population south of the border is healthier than expected. Roscate Terns *Sterna dougallii* are hanging on by the skin of their teeth in the North (just six

pairs in 1995), with the vast bulk of the West European population in the Republic.

The numbers of summering Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* and Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* in the island of Ireland have been increasing steadily in recent years and records for 1995 suggest that first breeding cannot be far away. They have been pipped at the post, however, by a new breeding species for Ireland: a pair of Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* at a currently undisclosed site.

Lessons from NRA boob

Mid June: waist-high river-bank vegetation filled with breeding Sedge Warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and the flowers throbbing with bees and flashing with dragonflies . . . until National Rivers Authority tractors and boats turned the banks into a lawn and destroyed the fringing reedbeds. This could have been anywhere, but happens to have been along the River Ivel beside Fountains in Blunham.

Some of the workmen involved were as horrified at what they were being expected to do as we were at seeing it done. The site manager defended the devastation, claiming that the conservationists in the NRA had approved it and that they said that it was doing no environmental damage. No environmental damage!

Thank Heavens for sanity, however, when NRA Anglia Region headquarters was contacted by telephone and the NRA's Area Flood Defence Manager, Ian Hart, immediately visited the site. The NRA's guidelines—(1) no bank-vegetation cutting

within 1 m of the water's edge, (2) no bank cutting at all until the second week of July, and (3) cutting in the river only in the central channel and not within 2 m of either bank—had been ignored. Happily, the unnecessary and lethal (to nestlings) 'manicuring' of the river banks was immediately halted.

Mistakes happen. But lessons can be learned. In this case, we hope that the NRA's excellent guidelines, outlined to us verbally, can be put into easily understandable written instructions (if that has not already been done), and these passed annually not only to offices where they will be filed or 'binned', but also given to the men who are actually carrying out the work (everywhere in the UK, not just in East Anglia), so that such misunderstandings never recur.

If you see the guidelines being broken, tell the NRA at once. Equally, a letter of appreciation to the NRA would doubtless be welcomed if the guidelines are being adhered to in your area.

We shall be keeping an eye on future events.

Hampshire Birds

An audience of 250 gathered at Southampton University on 4th March to enjoy a conference organised jointly by the Hampshire Ornithological Society and the BTO on 'The Ups and Downs of Hampshire Birds'. John Clark (HOS) presented a positive picture of the fortunes of Hampshire's birds since 1950, with success stories such as those of Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*, Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, and Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* outnumbering species in decline or lost as breeders such as Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, and Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*. Dick Potts of the Game Conservancy painted a more depressing picture of the outlook for the Grey Partridge

Perdix perdix and other farmland species, and David Burges (RSPB) pointed out that the current high numbers of European Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus* in Hampshire resulted from a coincidence of the forestry cycle in certain major forests in the county and storm damage in 1987 and later, not from the health of Hampshire's heathlands. In between, we heard Rob Fuller (BTO) on woodland management, were stunned by showman David Boag's photographs of Common Kingfishers *Alcedo atthis*, and reminisced over the past 50 years with Norman Orr (HOS). The traditional *British Birds* mystery photographs competition resulted in a three-way tie, with the draw for the bottle of champagne being won by Rosie Powell.

(Contributed by Nigel Peace)

Moroccan Rare Birds Committee

A Moroccan rarities committee has recently been established with Moroccan, Belgian and French members. The annual report of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee (MRBC) will be published in *Porphyrio* in French with a summary in English. A list of species that should be submitted will be supplied on

request from, and all records of rare birds should be sent to, Dr Jacques Franchimont, Secretary of the Moroccan Rare Birds Committee, Villa Elizabeth, 9 rue Abdellouahad el Marrakchi, V. N. Meknès, Morocco. (Contributed by Hugues Dufourmy)

New bird books in Wales

Congratulations go to birdwatchers in south Wales for their part in the production of two important new books. The recent launch of the new *Birds in Glamorgan* at the National Museum of Wales followed hard on the publication of *Birds of Pembrokeshire*. Both books provide excellent updates of previous county/vice-county avifaunas and both include maps of breeding distribution based on tetrad data gathered during the 1980s.

On 10th June, Peter Morgan, Rob Hume and Stephanie Tyler helped to launch the Glamorgan book, which has been written largely by Clive Hurford, a monitoring ecologist with the Countryside Council for Wales, and Peter Lansdown, well known to all *BB* readers as past Chairman of the Rarities Committee. Their production is a very worthy successor to the previous *Birds of Glamorgan* (1967), and the first list dating back to 1802. It is full of interesting snippets, as well as being well illustrated with sketches and both black-and-white and colour photographs of habitats and birds. It ensures that Glamorgan remains

the best-documented county in Wales.

Birds of Pembrokeshire (1994), with a foreword by Ronald Lockley, is the third in its line, the others being published in 1894 and 1949. A colour painting of Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* on Skomer graces its cover. Who better to write this book than Jack Donovan, bird recorder for the county for 34 years, vice-president of the Dyfed Wildlife Trust and Chairman of the Skokholm and Skomer Management Committees, and Pembrokeshire-born Graham Rees, joint bird-recorder and editor of the Pembrokeshire Bird Report since 1981 and BTO Regional Rep.?

These two publications, together with the relatively recent *Birds of Gwent* (1977) and the *Gwent Breeding Bird Atlas* (1987), *Birds of Radnorshire and Mid Powys* (1985) and *Birds of Breconshire* (1990), mean that the southern part of Wales is well covered with county avifaunas. Let us hope that these are a spur to counties in north and west Wales, where there has been a dearth of recent ornithological publications. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

Welcome 'Alula'

A new Finnish quarterly birding magazine, called *Alula*, will concentrate on publishing 'richly illustrated identification papers, with good-quality colour photographs'. The text will be in Finnish and English, with at least an extensive English summary to all papers considered to be of international interest. There will be two issues in 1995, but from 1996 *Alula* will appear quarterly. The April 1995 issue includes papers on identification, ageing and sexing of Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaeus* and Black-throated *Gavia arctica* and Red-throated Divers *G. stellata* in flight, and Finland's first Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon*.

The Editor-in-chief is Antero Topp and the other editors are Dick Forsman, Hannu Jännes, Matti Kapanen, Pekka Keskinen and Pekka J. Nikander—mostly familiar names to *British Birds* readers. We send our best wishes to this new magazine and look forward to long and fruitful co-operation with *Alula*.

The subscription price for 1995 is 90 Finnish marks in Finland and 105 FIM elsewhere (or the equivalent amount in US dollars, sterling or Deutschmarks; and you can pay by Visa/Eurocard). Write to *Alula*, PO Box 85, Fin-02271 Espoo, Finland.

New Italian magazine

We have just received the latest issue of *Rivista Italiana di Birdwatching*. It is a pleasure to welcome this new magazine, which reflects the fast-growing interest in ornithology in Italy. For details, write to Marcello Grussu, via Cagliari 2, I-09095 Mogoro (Oristano), Italy.

New editor for 'Scottish Birds'

Dr Stan da Prato is taking over from Anne-Marie Smout as editor of our sister journal, *Scottish Birds*. We send our best wishes to them both.

Membership of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club is £15.00 p.a., and the address to write to is 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 5BT.

Devon gets new President

No sooner does she retire from the Presidency of the BOU (*Brit. Birds* 88: 387) than Dr Janet Kear accepts a new responsibility: taking over as President of the Devon Bird-watching and Preservation Society from Robin Khan, who now becomes Hon. Vice President.

Red Kite sightings

As part of the English Nature/RSPB Red Kite *Milvus milvus* reintroduction programme a second English population is being established by releasing birds at a secret location in the Midlands. Small breeding populations have already been successfully established in southern England and northern Scotland. In 1994, 20 pairs reared 37 young in southern England and eight pairs reared 13 young in northern Scotland.

The first release of birds imported from Castilla y León, central Spain, at the new site took place in July-August. Each bird has been fitted with coloured, letter-and-number coded wing-tags and a radio transmitter, allowing its movements to be tracked.

All sightings of Red Kites from Bedford-

shire, Cambridgeshire, Derbyshire, Hertfordshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands will be welcomed. Records are of particular value if the letter-and-number code or colour of wing-tags can be seen, and all such records, from anywhere in the UK, will be much appreciated. Please send details, including exact location and as much information as possible on the bird's behaviour, to Ian Carter, English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA (tel: 01733 318 324).

Please send Scottish records of all Red Kites, whether with or without wing-tags, to Lorcan O'Toole at RSPB's North Scotland Regional Office, Etive House, Beechwood Park, Inverness IV2 3BW.

Red Kite trail opens

In 1994, the Welsh population of Red Kites *Milvus milvus*, numbering 108 pairs, raised 97 young, the best breeding result this century. Following on from this success came the opening of the 'Red Kite Viewing Trail' in 1995. This consists of a range of opportunities to view Red Kites throughout mid Wales, based around six key centres: Llandoverly, Llandrindod Wells, Llanwrtyd Wells, Nant yr Arian near Ponterwyd, Gigrin Farm at Rhayader, and the RSPB Dinas reserve. There are various activities throughout the year, including winter watching of kites and other carrion feeders at two stations.

We recently returned from a visit to mid Wales and took the opportunity to call in at both the Dinas reserve (Red Kite circling overhead) and the Llanwrtyd Wells centre. The latter provided closed-circuit TV pictures of Red Kites, Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus*, Barn Owls *Tyto alba* and Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis*. Whilst there, the female Goshawk was watched dismembering and feeding her young on a Eurasian Sparrowhawk *A. nisus*. A leaflet detailing the Red Kite trail is available from RSPB, Bryn Aderyn, Newtown, Powys SY16 2AB; tel. 01686-624143.

New BNP member

We are delighted to report that Ian Dawson has agreed to join the Behaviour Notes Panel.

All notes published in *British Birds* are assessed by members of the Behaviour Notes Panel or the Identification Notes Panel, and the Editorial Board. The current members of the BNP are Dr Colin Bibby, Dr Jim Flegg, Derek Goodwin, Dr Ian Newton FRS, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Dr Tim Sharrock and Dr Ken Simmons, with Ian Dawson now taking the Panel membership to eight.

In the past, Ian has been compiler of our monthly 'Recent reports', is still one of our regular proof-readers, was until recently on the BOU Records Committee and, as the RSPB's Librarian, has an encyclopedic knowledge of the ornithological literature. Ian was profiled in 'Personalities' in 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 378-380).

Green power on East Anglian reserves

We have recently heard that Scolt Head, Norfolk, has joined Havergate Island, Suffolk, to become East Anglia's latest reserve to receive its power from wind and sun. Between them they are powering communications equipment, lighting, refrigerators and televisions with the aid of solar panels and wind generators. The romance of the lonely nature reserve warden, cut off from all contact other than with the birds that he (or she) is charged with protecting, seems to be a thing of the past. They can now, presumably, be contacted easily by the boss and also watch 'Neighbours'. Further details from On-Site Power Ltd, Chalk Barn, Winch Road, Gayton, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE32 1QP.

Wind farms in Andalucia

News just in from the Sociedad Española de Ornitología (Spanish Ornithological Society) paints a rather depressing picture concerning future developments near Tarifa. Many British birders will have enjoyed the spectacular migration in this part of southern Spain, and will also have seen the wind farms operating in the area. We must all be supportive of green energy production, but the siting of any such development is critical. There are currently 268 windmill generators operating in the Tarifa area, but there are plans for a further 900. Regretably, there appears to be no general plan and no control being exerted by the regional Andalucia government, in other words a complete lack of any environmental-impact assessment.

At a minimum, a quarter of a million diurnal migrating raptors pass through this area, mainly Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus*, Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* and Black Kites *Milvus migrans*, together with Black

Ciconia nigra and White Storks *C. ciconia*. Add to this the impressive passage of tens of millions of nocturnal migrants that pass through the area each spring and autumn and the possibility of a major environmental catastrophe is in the making. Quite clearly, any such wind-power construction needs careful consideration and siting. Until environmental considerations have been fully investigated, all future construction should cease.

If you agree that environmental investigation should take place urgently, write to the President of the Andalucian Region Government: Excmo. Sr D. Manuel Chaves González, Presidente de la Junta de Andalucía, Avda. de Roma s/n, 41071 Sevilla, Spain, informing him of your views. The official deadline is for letters to arrive before 30th September so please write at once (but protests even after this date will still have an impact).

More Slender-billed Curlews

Made famous by its wintering Slender-billed Curlews *Numenius tenuirostris*, Merja Zerga in Morocco is the 'Site to Save' featured in an article by Gary Allport in the latest issue of *World Birdwatch* (vol. 17, no. 2, June 1995), with tips on how to make the most of a trip there.

World Birdwatch also reports on the flock of 20 Slender-billed Curlews wintering in southern Italy from January to March 1995, the largest flock of this species to be seen for many years.

A good home for your spare transparencies

Do you have any spare photographic slides of birds (or of wildlife habitats under any form of threat) which are surplus to your requirements? If so, they could be very helpful to illustrate lectures and seminars on ornithology and bird protection at the Lviv State University in Ukraine. Even just a few spare slides would be greatly appreciated by Dr Igor Gorban of Lviv State University, Department of Zoology, Grushevskiy str. 4, Lviv 290005, Ukraine.

Help for declining farmland species

There have been some dramatic declines in the numbers of six common farmland birds in the last 20 years: Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* down by 75% to 150,000 pairs, Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* down 54% to 2 million pairs, Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* down a massive 86% to 110,000 pairs, Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* down 56% to 520,000 pairs, Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* down 59% to 220,000 pairs and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* down 77% to 20,000 pairs.

Just what role the use of agricultural chemicals has played in this decline is still not certain, but changes in farming practices are certainly implicated quite strongly. The Game

Conservancy Trust, the RSPB, the BTO and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group have now come together to produce a series of guidelines for suitable management on lowland farms. The guidelines stress the importance of stubbles for winter food and conservation strips for seeds and insects. They show the value of sympathetically managed, naturally regenerated rotational set-aside for all the six species, and, most importantly, advocate the careful and selective use of herbicides and insecticides. Further information from Melinda Appleby, Agriculture and land-use adviser, RSPB, tel: 01767-680551.

Power cable goes underground

Good news in that nearly 1 km of overhead power lines near the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust centre at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, is to be placed underground. Midlands Electricity plc, following discussions with the WWT, is to spend £20,000 removing the lines and installing new underground cables in their place.

Raptors, The Gambia and the Inner Hebrides

In the September issue of *Bird Watching* magazine, the RSPB proposes a new attitude towards Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* and Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus*; Richard Millington looks at Britain's rarest raptors; the birding potential of The Gambia is outlined; and Dr Malcolm Ogilvie describes the attractions of the Inner Hebrides.

Rare breeding birds

Observers with information on rare breeding birds in Britain in 1995 are requested to send full details now to the relevant county bird recorder (or to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel's Secretary, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN). *Please do not wait until the end of the year.*

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MONTHLY MARATHON



We greatly regret that the closing dates for the last two hurdles (plates 97 and 111) were given incorrectly as 15th July and 15th August, instead of 15th August and 15th September, respectively. We are, therefore, extending the deadline for receipt of answers relating to both of these two photographs to 15th October, to give all entrants a chance to consider them thoroughly. We also give the opportunity to anyone who has already sent in an answer (of necessity, one arrived at hastily) to submit a substitute, revised answer, *provided that this is clearly marked 'SECOND, REVISED ENTRY'.*

All entrants can be alerted to the fact that the identification of the four birds in plates 97 and 111 are giving rise to considerable debate, and deserve very careful analysis. This month's hurdle is shown in plate 126 on page 446.

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Plate 126. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 111: either eighteenth stage in seventh 'Marathon' or first or second stage in eighth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 65 of the January issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th October 1995.



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 10th July to 13th August 1995.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Fetlar (Shetland), 17th-24th July.

Madeira/Cape Verde/Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae/mollis* Two, Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 27th July.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* Total of 638, Cape Clear Island, 28th July.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis* Total of 974, Cape Clear Island, 28th July.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* Singles off Cape Clear Island, 19th and 27th July and 12th August.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* River Wansbeck, near Blyth (Northumberland), 12th-13th August.

Least Sandpiper *C. minutilla* Sidlesham Ferry (West Sussex), 19th-25th July.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Old Hall Marshes (Essex), 28th July; Pett Level (East Sussex), 31st July; three together, Candley Beet Factory (Norfolk), 4th-13th August.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Snettisham (Norfolk), 14th-15th July.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* Inverness (Highland), 18th and 22nd July.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* Kyle of Lochalsh (Highland), 22nd-25th July; Stowford Common (Devon), 30th July.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* Benacre Pits (Suffolk), 12th-13th August.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* St Margaret's at Cliffe (Kent), 13th August.



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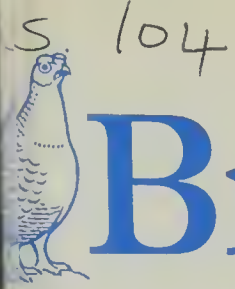
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Front cover: Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*,
Attenborough Nature Reserve,
Nottinghamshire, September 1994 (*Chris
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cover design, measuring 18.6 × 20.8 cm, is
for sale in a postal auction (see page 25 in
January issue for procedure)



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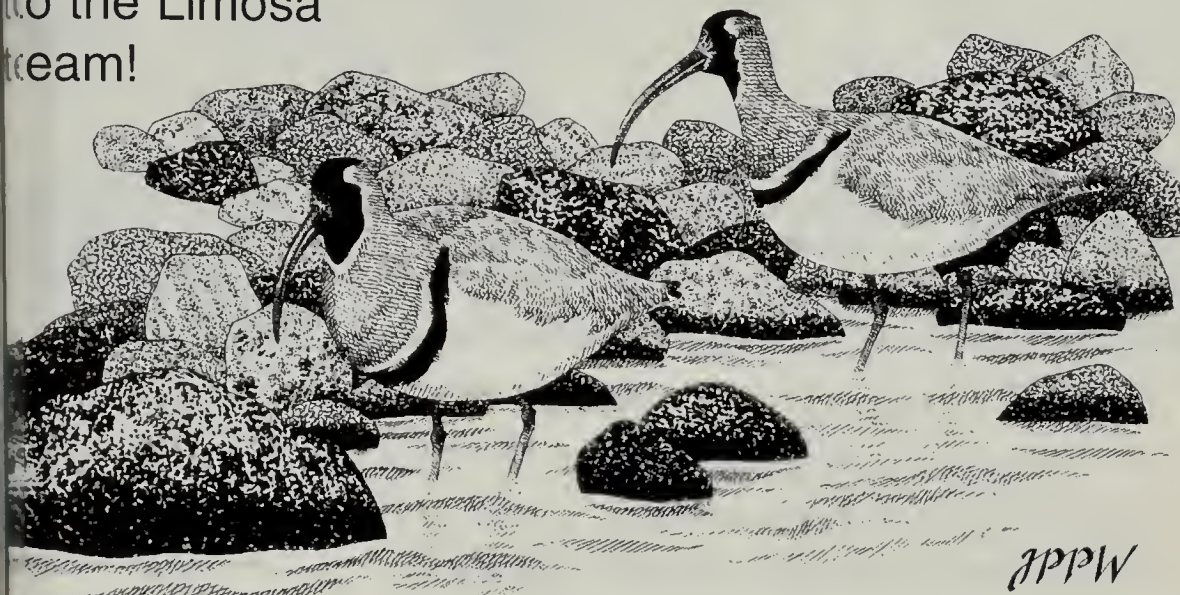
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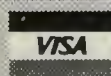
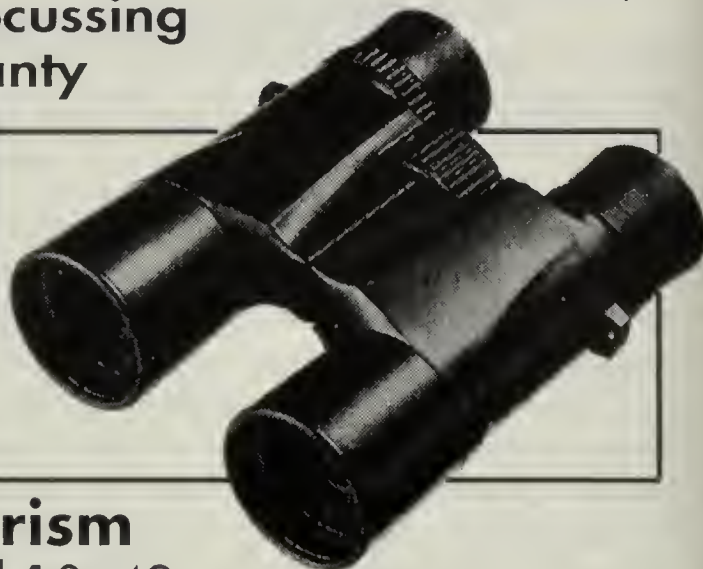
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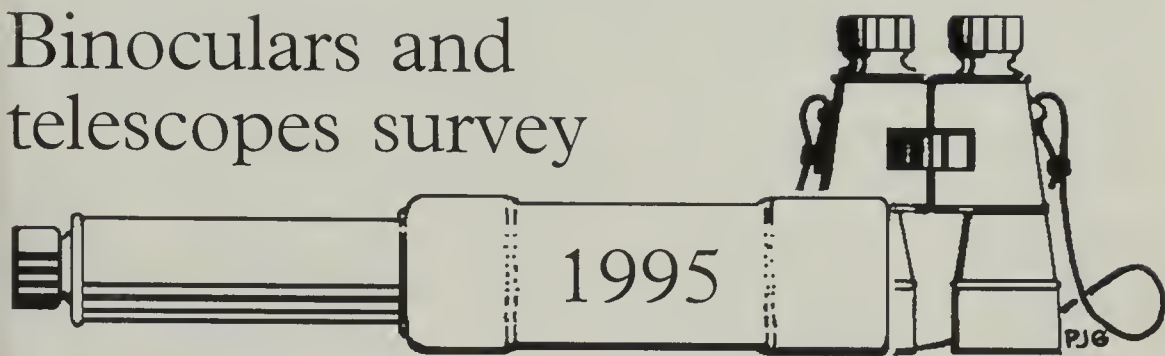
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Binoculars and telescopes survey



J. T. R. Sharrock and C. M. Forrest

This is the sixth periodic report on the opinions of the subscribers to *British Birds* of their binoculars and telescopes. The previous reports were published in 1978, 1983, 1985, 1988 and 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 429-439; 76: 155-161; 78: 167-175; 81: 149-160; 84: 267-282).

As we have pointed out previously, *British Birds* subscribers are, as a group, perhaps the most discriminating and demanding users of optical equipment, since not only is their general degree of competence as ornithologists exceptionally high, but they also make use of binoculars and telescopes for an enormous range of different tasks—from distinguishing feather lengths at close range on waders or warblers to picking out raptors or seabirds at great range—and in a very wide range of habitats and conditions—from the twilight of dawn and dusk on murky English October days to the brilliance of midday in Middle Eastern deserts.

These, and a wide variety of other general principles, have been discussed in detail in our previous five reports. Rather than repeat them here, we refer new readers particularly to the most recent previous account (*Brit. Birds* 84: 267-282); this report will concentrate on the results of the latest questionnaire (over 750 were completed and returned for analysis), which are presented mainly in tabular form (tables 1-12). It assumes that readers are familiar with points such as the fact that *all* the binoculars and telescopes listed here are the top makes and models, and that even the lowest-rated are still good and amongst the best available, since *British Birds* subscribers would not own (and report on) poor-quality equipment. The questionnaire form itself was identical to that of previous surveys (see e.g. *Brit. Birds* 84: 268). A few of the returned forms contained answers to some but not all questions. In consequence, the totals are not necessarily the same in each table.

Binoculars

The most popular binoculars are still the *Zeiss West* 10×40 and the *Zeiss West* 7×42, the latter having continued to gain in popularity (table 1). The *Leica* 10×42BA has risen to take third place, and two other *Leica* models, the 8×42BA and the 8×32BA, have appeared in the listings for the first time, as have the *Swarovski* 10×42SLC and *Opticron* HR8×42.

Zeiss is still the most popular make, owned by three out of every eight top birdwatchers (table 2). *Leica* has overtaken *Optolyth* as the second-most-popular and *Swarovski* is also coming up fast, these two increasing their shares by over 50% and over 80%, respectively.

Table 1. Most popular binoculars.
The binoculars most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1994.

Position	(1990 position)	Make & model	1990 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	ZEISS WEST 10×40	28.4	23.1
2nd	(2)	ZEISS WEST 7×42	8.8	9.6
3rd	(13=)	LEICA 10×42BA	1.3	5.5
4th	(4)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5×44	5.5	4.0
5th	(6)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×50	4.2	3.6
6th	—	LEICA 8×42BA	—	3.5
7th	(3)	LEITZ Trinovid 10×40B	6.0	3.3
8th	(7)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10×50	3.7	3.2
9th	—	LEICA 8×32BA	—	2.9
10th	(8)	LEITZ Trinovid 8×40B	2.8	2.3
11th	(5)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×40	4.9	2.0
12th=	—	SWAROVSKI 10×42SLC	—	1.7
12th=	—	OPTICRON HR8×42	—	1.7
12th=	(11)	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 10×42B	1.7	1.7
15th	(13=)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8×30	1.3	1.4
16th=	(12)	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 8×42B	1.4	1.3
16th=	(9)	SWAROVSKI Diana 10×40	2.4	1.3
18th	(16)	LEITZ Trinovid 7×42B	1.2	1.2
		All others	22.4	26.7

Table 2. Most popular makes of binocular.
The makes most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1994.

Position	(1990 position)	Make	1990 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	ZEISS (formerly ZEISS WEST)	39.7	37.9
2nd	(3)	LEICA (formerly LEITZ)	12.8	19.9
3rd	(2)	OPTOLYTH	12.9	8.2
4th	(4)	ZEISS JENA	8.4	6.2
5th=	(7)	SWAROVSKI	2.9	5.3
5th=	(5)	SWIFT	6.7	5.3
7th	(6)	BAUSCH & LOMB	3.7	4.7
8th	(8)	OPTICRON	2.5	4.1
9th	—	BUSHNELL	—	0.9
10th=	—	ROSS	—	0.8
10th=	(10)	NIKON	1.3	0.8
		All others	9.1	5.9

Owners' ratings of their binoculars (table 3) include some models owned in very small numbers but highly regarded by their users. We leave it to our readers to judge the weight they give to 'rave reviews' provided by such small samples, but the *Leica/Leitz* 8×20, *Zeiss* Night Owl 7×45 and *Zeiss* Night Owl 8×56 are

Table 3. Most highly rated binoculars.

Performance of binoculars as rated by their owners. Performance rating: 6 = excellent, 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor.
All prices in tables 3–5 are those on 14th July 1995, including VAT; they are included to facilitate comparisons between models, but should be regarded as approximate.

Position	(1990 position)	Make & model	Price	6	5	4	3	2	1	Average performance rating	
1st=	—	LEICA/LEITZ 8×20	£265	3	—	—	—	—	—	Excellent	6.00
1st=	—	ZEISS Night Owl 7×45	£879	3	—	—	—	—	—	Excellent	6.00
1st=	(1)	ZEISS Night Owl 8×56	£979	3	—	—	—	—	—	Excellent	6.00
4th	(1=)	LEICA 10×42BA	£798	38	3	—	—	—	—	Excellent	5.93
5th	(7)	LEITZ Trinovid 7×42B	—	8	1	—	—	—	—	Excellent	5.89
6th=	(4)	ZEISS WEST 7×42	£778	61	11	—	—	—	—	Excellent	5.85
6th=	(10)	LEICA 8×42BA	£778	22	4	—	—	—	—	Excellent	5.85
6th=	—	SWAROVSKI 10×42SLC	£679	11	2	—	—	—	—	Excellent	5.85
9th	(13)	ZEISS WEST 8×30	£699	4	1	—	—	—	—	Excellent	5.80
10th=	—	LEICA 8×32BA	£698	17	5	—	—	—	—	Excellent	5.77
10th=	(6)	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 10×42B	£729	10	3	—	—	—	—	Excellent	5.77
12th=	—	SWAROVSKI 8×30SLC	£499	6	2	—	—	—	—	Excellent	5.75
12th=	—	SWAROVSKI 7×42SLC	£619	3	1	—	—	—	—	Excellent	5.75
14th=	(1=)	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 8×42B	£729	8	1	1	—	—	—	Excellent	5.70
14th=	(14)	SWAROVSKI Diana 10×40	£450	7	3	—	—	—	—	Excellent	5.70
16th=	—	ZEISS WEST 8×56	£899	4	2	—	—	—	—	Excellent	5.67
16th=	—	ZEISS WEST 8×20	£245	2	1	—	—	—	—	Excellent	5.67
18th	(9)	ZEISS WEST 10×40	£769	114	55	5	—	—	—	Excellent	5.63
19th	(5)	LEITZ Trinovid 8×40B	—	11	5	1	—	—	—	Excellent	5.59
20th	(8)	LEITZ Trinovid 10×40B	—	14	10	1	—	—	—	Excellent	5.52
21st=	(11)	NIKON 8×30ECF	£299	1	2	—	—	—	—	Very good	5.33
21st=	—	SWIFT 10×50	£289	1	2	—	—	—	—	Very good	5.33
23rd	(16)	OPTICRON Classic 10×42	£175	1	3	—	—	—	—	Very good	5.25
24th	(20)	ZEISS WEST 10×50	—	2	2	1	—	—	—	Very good	5.20
25th=	(21)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5×44	£279	7	19	3	1	—	—	Very good	5.07
25th=	(28)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×50	£361	7	15	5	—	—	—	Very good	5.07
27th=	—	BAUSCH & LOMB Custom 10×40	£329	2	3	—	1	—	—	Very good	5.00
27th=	(33)	OPTOLYTH Touring 10×40	£534	1	1	1	—	—	—	Very good	5.00
27th=	—	OPTOLYTH Touring 7×42	£534	—	3	—	—	—	—	Very good	5.00
30th	(23)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×40	£318	—	5	1	—	—	—	Very good	4.83
31st	(31)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10×50	—	3	14	6	1	—	—	Very good	4.79
32nd=	(32)	ZEISS JENA Notarem 10×40	—	2	1	2	1	—	—	Very good	4.67
32nd=	(12)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 12×50	£370	1	—	2	—	—	—	Very good	4.67
34th	(22)	OPTOLYTH 10×40	£324	2	7	4	2	—	—	Very good	4.60

all regarded as superb by those who have them. Among the most widely owned models, the *Leica* 10×42BA, *Zeiss West* 7×42, *Leica* 8×42BA and *Swarovski* 10×42SLC are especially praised, but an amazing 20 models are all regarded as ‘Excellent’ (and several others with even smaller samples would also have come into this category).

‘I’d get the same again’ is indeed an accolade for any product, and, with a small sample, the *Zeiss Night Owl* 7×45 achieved a 100% score; *Leica* also deserves congratulations for providing three of the top four models, 8×32BA, 10×42BA and 8×42BA (table 4).

The listing of binoculars which top birdwatchers currently plan to buy when they replace their current models (table 5) reveals that the ever-popular *Zeiss West* 10×40 is still the top choice, but now has far more competition than in the past, with the *Leica* 10×42BA and 8×32BA models lying second and third. The new ‘Night Owl’ range introduced by *Zeiss* is headed by the 7×45, which appears in sixth position. Taking all models, *Leica* has now ousted *Zeiss* from its dominant top position (table 6), and *Swarovski* has risen four places to occupy the number three slot.

In the 1995 sample, 39.5% of respondents reported that they wear spectacles when birdwatching, and 71.8% of them (sensibly) do not raise or remove their spectacles when using binoculars.

Table 4. The most satisfactory binoculars.
Proportion of current owners who would buy the same binoculars again.

Position	(1990 position)	Make & model	Price	No.	(%)
1st	—	ZEISS Night Owl 7 × 45	£879	3/3	100.0
2nd	—	LEICA 8 × 32BA	£698	19/22	86.4
3rd	(4)	LEICA 10 × 42BA	£798	32/41	78.0
4th	(1)	LEICA 8 × 42BA	£778	18/26	69.2
5th	—	SWIFT 10 × 50	£289	2/3	66.7
6th	—	SWAROVSKI 8 × 30SLC	£499	5/8	62.5
7th	(2)	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 8 × 42B	£729	6/10	60.0
8th=	(5)	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 10 × 42B	£729	7/13	53.8
8th=	—	SWAROVSKI 10 × 42SLC	£679	7/13	53.8
10th	(3)	ZEISS WEST 7 × 42	£769	37/72	51.4
11th=	—	BUSHNELL Natureview 8 × 42	£129	2/4	50.0
11th=	—	SWAROVSKI 7 × 42SLC	£619	2/4	50.0
13th	(7)	ZEISS WEST 10 × 40	£769	64/180	35.5
14th=	—	BAUSCH & LOMB Custom 10 × 40	£329	2/6	33.3
14th=	—	OPTOLYTH Touring 7 × 42	£534	1/3	33.3
14th=	(12=)	OPTOLYTH Touring 10 × 40	£534	1/3	33.3
14th=	(11)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 12 × 50	£370	1/3	33.3
18th	(9=)	SWAROVSKI Diana 10 × 40	£450	3/10	30.0
19th	(20)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10 × 50	£361	8/27	29.6
20th	(9=)	OPTICRON Classic 10 × 42	£175	1/4	25.0
21st	(15)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10 × 40	£324	3/15	20.0
22nd=	(14)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5 × 44	£279	5/30	16.7
22nd=	(24)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8 × 40	£318	1/6	16.7
22nd=	—	ZEISS WEST 8 × 56	£899	1/6	16.7
25th	—	OPTICRON HR8 × 42	£229	2/13	15.4
		All others		37/242	15.3

The increasing move towards lower-powered binoculars (giving high priorities to size of field of view and high light-gathering) is demonstrated by the proportions of respondents using binoculars of 10× or higher magnification: this was 78% in 1982, but had dropped to 69% in 1990 and was 52% in the current survey. The 8× and 7× models have a bright future.

Table 5. Top binoculars for the future.
The make and model which experienced birdwatchers intend to purchase next time they buy a pair of binoculars.

Position	(1990 position)	Make & model	Price	1990 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	ZEISS WEST 10×40	£769	28.5	10.2
2nd	(3)	LEICA 10×42BA	£798	8.8	9.7
3rd	—	LEICA 8×32BA	£698	—	8.4
4th	(2)	ZEISS WEST 7×42	£769	13.8	7.2
5th	(4)	LEICA 8×42BA	£778	4.2	5.3
6th	—	ZEISS Night Owl 7×45	£879	—	3.9
7th=	—	SWAROVSKI 10×42SLC	£679	—	2.2
7th=	(7=)	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 10×42B	£729	2.6	2.2
9th	—	ZEISS Night Owl 10×56	£1059	—	2.1
10th	—	ZEISS Night Owl 8×56	£979	—	1.6
11th	(11)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×50	£361	1.8	1.5
12th=	—	LEICA 10×50BA	£950	—	1.2
12th=	(7=)	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 8×42B	£729	2.6	1.2
14th	(5=)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5×44	£279	2.8	1.1
15th=	(12)	LEICA 7×42BA	£778	1.4	0.9
15th=	(14=)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×40	£318	0.8	0.9
17th	(9)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×40	£324	2.3	0.8
		Others		23.2	{ 16.2
		No decision			{ 22.6

Table 6. Top makes of binocular for the future.
The makes which experienced birdwatchers intend to purchase next time they buy a pair of binoculars.

Position	(1990 position)	Make	1990 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(2)	LEICA (formerly LEITZ)	17.9	31.2
2nd	(1)	ZEISS (formerly ZEISS WEST)	45.1	29.6
3rd	(7)	SWAROVSKI	2.4	4.6
4th	(4)	BAUSCH & LOMB	5.4	4.5
5th	(3)	OPTOLYTH	6.1	4.4
6th	(5)	SWIFT	3.5	1.7
7th=	(8=)	OPTICRON	1.0	0.8
7th=	—	BUSHNELL	—	0.8
9th	(8=)	NIKON	1.0	0.7
10th	(6)	ZEISS JENA	2.5	0.5
		Others	15.1	{ 1.1
		Don't know		{ 20.1

Telescopes

Nowadays, about three-quarters of experienced birdwatchers use a telescope ‘always’ or ‘regularly’ when birdwatching, and 77% of them ‘always’ use a tripod (and only 2% of them ‘never’).

The *Kowa* TSN-1/2 is still the most popular telescope, with, as we predicted, the *Kowa* TSN-3/4 rising to second position (table 7). The sturdy, reliable

Table 7. Most popular telescopes.

The telescopes most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1994.

Position	(1990 position)	Make & model	1990 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	KOWA TSN-1/TSN-2 × 77	16.2	18.3
2nd	(3)	KOWA TSN-3/TSN-4 × 77	7.7	12.5
3rd	(4)	OPTOLYTH TBS/G80	7.5	7.7
4th	(6)	NIKON Fieldscope EDII × 60	5.8	6.8
5th	(2)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster × 60	12.2	6.5
6th	(8)	NIKON Fieldscope ED × 60	4.5	6.4
7th	(5)	OPTOLYTH 30 × 75GA	6.9	4.5
8th	(10)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60 × 60	3.2	3.4
9th	(7)	KOWA TS-1/TS-2 × 60	4.7	3.0
10th	–	KOWA TS-613/TS-614	–	2.4
11th	–	KOWA TS-611/TS-612	–	2.2
12th	(11)	OPTOLYTH 30 × 80GA	2.1	2.1
13th	(14)	HERTEL & REUSS × 60	1.8	1.8
14th	(17=)	OPTICRON Piccolo × 60	0.9	1.7
15th=	(9)	OPTICRON HR × 60	3.6	1.5
15th=	(12=)	QUESTAR (mirror-lens)	1.9	1.5
17th	–	OPTIMA × 60	–	1.2
18th=	–	OPTICRON Classic × 75	–	1.0
18th=	(12=)	KOWA TS-601/TS-602 × 60	1.9	1.0
18th=	–	SWAROVSKI AT80	–	1.0
18th=	(15)	NICKEL Supra × 60	1.2	1.0
		All others	17.3	12.5

Table 8. Most popular makes of telescope.

The makes most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1994.

Position	(1990 position)	Make	1990 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	KOWA	24.0	41.8
2nd	(2)	OPTOLYTH	21.3	16.6
3rd	(7)	NIKON	3.0	14.6
4th	(3)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB	20.6	10.3
5th	(4)	OPTICRON	7.8	5.2
6th=	(6)	MIRADOR	3.3	1.8
6th=	(5)	HERTEL & REUSS	5.1	1.8
8th	(16)	QUESTAR	0.3	1.5
9th	(13)	SWAROVSKI	0.7	1.3
10th	(10)	OPTIMA	1.4	1.2
11th	(8)	NICKEL	2.8	1.0
12th	(12)	CHARLES FRANK	1.0	0.7
		Others	8.7	2.2

Bushnell Spacemaster, which led the field in 1987, when it was owned by nearly 15% of observers, has now dropped to fifth position.

Kowa now dominates, with nearly 42% of birdwatchers using a *Kowa* telescope, this make having increased its share by 74% (table 8). The rising star, however, is *Nikon*, now in third place (from seventh), ownership having nearly quintupled since 1990. Other 'makes to watch' are *Swarovski* and the superb but expensive *Questar*, both of which are climbing the league table.

Owned by relatively few but rated faultless are the *Questar* and the *Nikon* ED78A (table 9). Three *Kowa* models, the *Swarovski* AT80 and the *Optolyth* TBS/G80 are also rated as excellent by their owners.

Table 9. Most highly rated telescopes.

Performance of telescopes as rated by their owners. Performance rating: 6 = excellent, 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor.

All prices in tables 9–11 are those on 14th July 1995, including VAT. Where changeable eyepieces can be added to a standard body, the price is that for the body plus the cheapest eyepiece appropriate for birdwatching. The prices are included to facilitate comparisons between models, but should be regarded as approximate; those preceded by *c* are especially variable.

Position	(1990 position)	Make & model	Price	Performance rating						Average performance rating	
				6	5	4	3	2	1		
1st=	(1)	QUESTAR (mirror–lens)	<i>c</i> £2750	9	–	–	–	–	–	Excellent	6.00
1st=	–	NIKON ED78A	£1195	6	–	–	–	–	–	Excellent	6.00
3rd	–	KOWA TS–614/TS–613	£668/£718	15	1	–	–	–	–	Excellent	5.94
4th	–	SWAROVSKI AT80	£695	5	2	–	–	–	–	Excellent	5.71
5th	(2)	KOWA TSN–3/TSN–4 × 77	£823	61	19	3	–	–	–	Excellent	5.70
6th	(–)	KOWA TS–612/TS–611	£368/£388	9	6	–	–	–	–	Excellent	5.60
7th	(6)	OPTOLYTH TBS/80	£644	32	18	2	–	–	–	Excellent	5.58
8th	(5)	NIKON Fieldscope I & II	£485	21	12	3	1	–	–	Very good	5.43
9th	(3)	NIKON Fieldscope EDII	£795	22	19	5	–	–	–	Very good	5.37
10th	(4)	NIKON Fieldscope EDI	–	2	3	1	–	–	–	Very good	5.17
11th	(7)	KOWA TSN–1/TSN–2 × 77	£468	30	78	11	3	–	–	Very good	5.07
12th	(8)	OPTOLYTH 30×80GA	£675	4	8	–	2	–	–	Very good	5.00
13th	(12)	KOWA TS–601/TS–602 × 60	–	–	5	2	–	–	–	Very good	4.71
14th	(11)	OPTOLYTH 30×75GA	£565	1	19	7	2	1	–	Very good	4.57
15th	(13=)	KOWA TS–1/TS–2 × 60	–	3	9	5	2	1	–	Very good	4.55
16th	(15)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster × 60	<i>c</i> £229	5	15	20	3	–	–	Very good	4.51
17th	(17)	OPTICRON HR × 60	£317	1	4	4	1	–	–	Very good	4.50
18th	(23)	MIRADOR Merlin × 60	–	–	2	1	1	–	–	Good	4.25
19th=	(18)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer × 60	<i>c</i> £349	1	7	11	2	2	–	Good	4.13
19th=	(16)	OPTIMA × 60	–	–	3	3	2	–	–	Good	4.13
21st	(21=)	OPTICRON Piccolo × 60	£230	–	5	3	2	1	–	Good	4.09
22nd	(21=)	MIRADOR Merlin × 75	–	–	1	2	1	–	–	Good	4.00
23rd	(20)	OPTICRON Classic × 75	£228	–	2	2	3	–	–	Good	3.86
24th	(26)	NICKEL Supra × 60	–	–	2	1	4	–	–	Good	3.71
25th	(19)	HERTEL & REUSS × 60	–	–	3	3	5	1	–	Good	3.67

The three models considered most satisfactory by their owners (who plan to buy the same telescope next time) are all relatively new, not having been included in the 1990 survey: *Kowa* TS-614/613, *Swarovski* AT80 and *Nikon* ED78A all achieving a loyalty rating of over 80% (table 10). The volatility of the optical market and discrimination shown by top birdwatchers is revealed by, for instance, the fact that less than one in five of owners of even the most popular model

Table 10. The most satisfactory telescopes.

Proportion of current owners who would buy the same telescope again.

Position	(1990 position)	Make & model	Price	No.	(%)
1st	—	KOWA TS-614/TS-613	£668/£718	14/16	87.5
2nd	—	SWAROVSKI AT80	£695	6/7	85.7
3rd	—	NIKON ED78A	£1195	5/6	83.3
4th	(4)	OPTOLYTH TBS/80	£644	29/52	55.8
5th	(1)	KOWA TSN-3/TSN-4 × 77	£823	37/84	44.0
6th=	(17)	OPTICRON HR × 60	£317	3/10	30.0
6th=	(3)	QUESTAR (mirror-lens)	c £2750	3/10	30.0
8th	—	KOWA TS-612/TS-611	£368/£388	4/15	26.7
9th	—	MIRADOR × 60	c£183	1/4	25.0
10th	(6)	OPTOLYTH 30 × 80GA	£675	3/14	21.4
11th	(2)	NIKON Fieldscope EDII × 60	£795	9/46	19.6
12th	(8)	KOWA TSN-1/TSN-2 × 77	£468	22/123	17.9
13th	(11=)	OPTICRON Classic × 75	£228	1/7	14.3
14th	(5)	NIKON Fieldscope × 60 I & II	£485	6/43	14.0
15th	(10)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster × 60	c £229	5/44	11.4
16th	—	OPTICRON Piccolo × 60	£230	1/11	9.1
17th	(9)	OPTOLYTH 30 × 75GA	£565	2/30	6.7
18th	(16)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60 × 60	c £349	1/23	4.3
		All others		11/128	8.6

Table 11. Top telescopes for the future.

The make and model which experienced birdwatchers intend to purchase next time they buy a telescope.

Position	(1990 position)	Make & model	Price	1990 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	KOWA TSN-3/TSN-4 × 77	£823	20.5	12.3
2nd	—	NIKON ED78A	£1195	—	9.2
3rd	(3)	OPTOLYTH TBS/G80	£664	9.2	8.2
4th	—	LEICA Televid × 77	£1095	—	6.1
5th	—	KOWA TS-614/TS-613	£668/£718	—	4.6
6th=	(4)	KOWA TSN-1/TSN-2 × 77	£468	8.8	4.5
6th=	(2)	NIKON Fieldscope EDII × 60	£795	19.3	4.5
8th	—	KOWA TS-612/TS-611	£368/£388	—	3.7
9th	—	NIKON Fieldscope II	£485	—	3.4
10th	—	SWAROVSKI AT80	£695	—	2.5
11th	(9)	OPTOLYTH 30 × 80GA	£675	1.6	1.5
		Others		28.0	{ 16.6
		Don't know			{ 22.9

(*Kowa* TSN-1/2) plan to buy the same telescope next time. No wonder optical manufacturers devote so much effort to promotion and advertising.

The *Kowa* TSN-3/4 remains the telescope to which most birdwatchers aspire (table 11), though both it and its chief rival last time (*Nikon* Fieldscope EDII) have declined in this respect: these two models were previously wanted by almost 40% of birdwatchers, a share now taken by *five* models.

The three most-owned makes of telescope (*Kowa*, *Nikon* and *Optolyth*) have retained their relative positions and share of the market so far as birdwatchers' future buying intentions are concerned (table 12), but look out for *Leica*, leaping into fourth place from nowhere, and note the steady rise of *Swarovski*, now fifth.

Table 12. Top makes of telescope for the future.
The make which experienced birdwatchers intend to purchase the next time they buy a telescope.

Position	(1990 position)	Make	1990 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	KOWA	38.4	37.2
2nd	(2)	NIKON	20.9	24.9
3rd	(3)	OPTOLYTH	14.2	15.6
4th	—	LEICA	—	12.9
5th	(7)	SWAROVSKI	0.4	3.3
6th	(6)	OPTICRON	0.4	1.9
7th=	(5)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB	3.9	1.5
7th=	(4)	QUESTAR	4.0	1.5
		All others	17.8	1.2

Counting the cost

With money not a consideration, most birdwatchers would choose to own, say, *Zeiss West* 10×40 or *Leica* 10×42BA binoculars and a *Kowa* TSN-3/4 telescope (or even a *Questar*).

Money is, however, usually a major consideration, for, with a good tripod, the 'ideal' combination would involve an outlay of over £1,500, and some of the other very highly rated choices would cost even more. Our advice is to peruse the tables in this report and also the price lists of reputable optical retailers to find the most highly rated equipment which is within the price range you can afford. Then try out the equipment, preferably in the field, to see if it suits you personally, before buying.

Finally, we wish to repeat that all the makes and models included in this report are of high quality. There are many other makes and hundreds of other models which will not feature in lists of optical equipment owned by discriminating birdwatchers of the high level of expertise of *British Birds* subscribers.

Acknowledgments

We thank the 753 *British Birds* readers who completed and returned the questionnaires. We are also most grateful to the optical retailing company *In Focus* (204 High Street, Barnet, Hertfordshire EN5 5SZ), which checked for us the specifications of the binoculars and telescopes listed in tables 1-12 and provided all the information concerning prices in the tables.

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The 'British Birds' Best Bird Book of the Year

For the benefit of those who may wish to acquire (or give as a present) just one of the many bird books published each year, *British Birds* selects annually its choice of the 'Best Bird Book of the Year' from those reviewed in the journal during the previous 12 months. The winner may, in one year, be an important, erudite scientific treatise and, in another, a lighter, less academic work, but it will always be reliable, well produced and thoroughly worthy of inclusion in any birdwatcher's library.

Our choice for BEST BIRD BOOK OF 1995 is:

Woodpeckers: a guide to the woodpeckers, piculets and wrynecks of the World.

By Hans Winkler, David A. Christie & David Nurney.

Pica Press, Mountfield, 1995. £30.00.
(Review: *Brit. Birds* 88: 287)

WOODPECKERS

A Guide to the Woodpeckers, Piculets and Wrynecks of the World



Hans Winkler, David A Christie and David Nurney

Two other books were close contenders and both are highly recommended: *Moult and Ageing of European Passerines* by Lukas Jenni & Raffael Winkler, published by Academic Press (review: *Brit. Birds* 87: 633-634), and *Where to Watch Birds in South America* by Nigel Wheatley, published by Christopher Helm Publishers (review: *Brit. Birds* 88: 323).

The Editorial Board was also very impressed by the new (fifth) edition of *Birds of Britain and Europe, with North Africa and the Middle East* by Hermann Heinzel, Richard Fitter & John Parslow, published by HarperCollins (review: *Brit. Birds* 88: 373).



The ornithological year 1994

Barry Nightingale and Keith Allsopp

This report summarises the major bird movements and influxes of 1994, as well as including the rarity highlights. All the rarities noted here have been accepted by either the British Birds Rarities Committee[†] or the Irish Rare Birds Committee, with the exception of two reports (each indicated by an asterisk); reports still under consideration or not yet submitted are not included. Full details of all the major rarities can be found in the annual report on 'Rare birds in Great Britain' in the November issue of *British Birds*.

Another mild winter

January was a cyclonic westerly month, with an almost complete absence of easterly, northerly and anticyclonic conditions. Mean temperatures ranged from near normal in Scotland to 2°C above in the southern half of England. It was the wettest January since 1988, but it was also very sunny.

Staying over from December 1993, the **Killdeer Plover** *Charadrius vociferus* on Anglesey (Gwynedd)* caused the first big twitch of the New Year. Equally exciting, but less obliging, was a **Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis* of the black-throated race *atrogularis* found near Bournemouth (Dorset) on 7th January. In Wales, another short-stayer, untypically, was a **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* at Fishguard (Dyfed) on 10th, departing the next day. **Bean Geese** *Anser fabalis*, always eagerly sought after by the year listers, provided two interesting local records, with 28 over Beddington Sewage-farm (Greater London) on 3rd and 130 just south of Falkirk (Central Region) on 16th January.

Goosanders *Mergus merganser* appeared in good numbers, with 260 at Hirsell Lake (Borders) on 9th January and 79 at Eversley Gravel-pits on 23rd, the highest count for Hampshire since winter 1962/63. Other sought-after wildfowl included the two regular **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca*, at Brothers Water (Cumbria) and Lea Marston (Warwickshire), and **Smews** *Mergus albellus* which arrived in above-average numbers. Up to 115 were reported, with the largest concentration at Dungeness RSPB Reserve (Kent), with a peak of 27 on 29th January, and up to seven in Northamptonshire, six on Eye Brook Reservoir (Leicestershire), 13 at Wraysbury (Berkshire) and nine at Draycote Water (Warwickshire). An overwintering **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* at Pitsea (Essex), found on 13th January and staying until 26th February, was unexpected, but echoed a previous wintering record from Berkshire in 1984. How many others go unnoticed in winter?

[†] The British Birds Rarities Committee is sponsored by Carl Zeiss Ltd.



Reports of **Red Kites** *Mikvus mikvus* from the reintroduction scheme partly obscure the traditional distribution pattern, but surely 54 feeding at Tregaron (Dyfed) were all of 'pure Welsh' blood? Just two **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* were seen throughout January, both in Scotland, and numbers of wintering **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor* (plate 127) were unexceptional. Gull-watchers, however, had plenty to search for among the winter roosts, with **Mediterranean Gulls** *Larus melanocephalus* and both **Glaucous** *L. hyperboreus* and **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoideus* appearing regularly. Over 100 **Mediterranean Gulls** were reported during January, including 18 at Foreland (Isle of Wight) on 23rd January and 11 at Copt Point (Kent) on 8th January. A minimum of 125 **Iceland Gulls** appeared, mostly during 6th-8th January, and again from 28th, and outnumbered **Glaucous Gulls**, which totalled 100. At Draycote Water (Warwickshire) seven **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla* picked out of a gull roost numbering 38,000 merited an observer-award for diligence. In Ireland, a **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*, an Irish rarity, stayed from late January to end February at Lough Hunshigo (Co. Down), but there were fewer than 20 others reported away from their breeding sites. **Grey Wagtails** *Motacilla cinerea* were plentiful in many areas, and a **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* at Southampton Town Quay (Hampshire) on 28th January must have been waiting for a southbound boat. A **Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca* at Bexhill (East Sussex) on 8th was also trying to overwinter, and three **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops*, in Strathelyde, Gwynedd and Norfolk, must have wished they were farther south. There were reasonable numbers of **Horned Larks** *Eremophila alpestris*, with over 20 reported, but **Bohemian Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* were few and far between, with fewer than 30, nearly all in Scotland.

February was generally wet, and it was the third cyclonic month in succession. There was, however, a marked southeasterly bias, with pressure well above average over Scandinavia. A **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* at Gruinard Bay (Highland) opened up February's account on 1st, but there was to be only one other in the first half of the year. A count of 1,000 **Bramblings** *Fringilla montifringilla* near Plymouth (Devon) on 2nd was one of the few large gatherings of this finch, and a **Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta* found on 4th February at Waterfoot (Co. Antrim) was the first for Northern Ireland. With the first ten days of February staying mild, numbers of **Northern Lapwings** *Vanellus vanellus* and **European Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis apricaria* were high everywhere, with counts of 5,000 of the former at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) and 6,300 of the latter at Lound (Nottinghamshire) typical of many reports.

Major seabird wreck

The most significant event of February came early, with news of a huge seabird wreck, first from Shetland and then from farther south. Large numbers of dead seabirds were washed ashore on all east-facing coasts of the North Sea, with **Common Guillemots** *Uria aalge*, **Razorbills** *Alca torda*, **Shags** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* and **Herring Gulls** *Larus argentatus* involved. Of over 2,700 corpses from Orkney, more than 2,200 were **Common Guillemots** and 254 were **Shags**. In all, it was estimated that total deaths reached 50,000, including 20,000 around Shetland's shores, and it was the largest incident of its kind since 1983. Subsequent counts at six Shetland **Common Guillemot** colonies suggested, however, that the wreck did not have a major impact on the population as a whole.

By surprising contrast, a **Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia* off Musselburgh (Lothian) on 6th February was found alive, but it flew off west before it could be added to many lists.

Late winter and early spring

Good numbers of **Water Pipits** were reported from southern counties of England, including 15 at Rainham (Essex), 29 on the Lower Test Marshes (Hampshire), 15 at Stoke Water Meadows (Surrey) and up to ten at Shoreham (West Sussex). Numbers of wintering **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa*

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Plate 127. Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*, Westleton Heath, Suffolk, winter 1993/94 (R. Chittenden)



Plate 128. First-winter male Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*, Pennington Flash, Greater Manchester, March 1994 (R. Chittenden)

Plate 129. Below, male Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* of red-spotted race *svecica*, Southwold, Suffolk, May 1994 (Rob Wilson)



limosa at Titchfield Haven (Hampshire) reached 1,000 on 13th February, and 84 **Mandarin Ducks** *Aix galericulata* were counted at Cutt Mill (Surrey). **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla* are overwintering with us in seemingly ever-increasing numbers, and are perhaps forming the nucleus of a permanent wintering population in Northern Europe. There were 16 reported in Hertfordshire, 19 different individuals ringed in a single Hampshire garden, records from 35 gardens in Avon and 'unprecedented numbers' reported from the Leigh area (Greater Manchester) and the West Midlands.

Northern Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* are unusual inland, so one flying east down the River Thames past Tower Bridge (Greater London) on 14th February and one over Stoke Lake (Surrey) on 20th were of interest. Another species which mostly attracts attention only when seen in unusual numbers is the **Coot** *Fulica atra*, so 1,800 at Linlithgow (Lothian) on 16th February provided sufficient inspiration for someone to count them.

Between 11th and 21st February, winter arrived and went. Southeasterly winds brought a drop in temperature and produced snowfalls. There followed some intensely cold days, until milder air reached the southern counties of Britain on 22nd. On 25th February, renewed warm southerlies spread over much of Britain, no doubt responsible for a **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* on Tresco (Scilly) on 28th, the first February record for Britain. Travelling companions, to remind us of spring, were a **Barn Swallow** *H. rustica* in Hampshire, that county's first February record, **Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia* in Ireland, Nottinghamshire and Gwynedd, **Northern Wheatears** in Surrey, Wiltshire and West Sussex and **House Martins** *Delichon urbica* in Scilly, all appearing before the end of February.

March was warm, and westerly-type weather dominated to an almost unprecedented extent. More summer migrants were in evidence across the southern counties of England by 5th, and the first of several multiple arrivals of **Penduline Tits** *Remiz pendulinus* occurred, with five at Dungeness on 4th, when a build-up of 1,230 **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus* off Whitecabbey (Co. Antrim) was noted. One of the most popular, not to say controversial, events started on 8th March, when a **Black-faced Bunting** *Emberiza spodocephala* was found at a feeding station at Pennington Flash (Greater Manchester)* (plate 128). Debate

continues on its status as a genuine vagrant or an escape from captivity. Whatever its origins, it attracted a great deal of attention during its long stay up to 24th April. Almost everything else seemed to pale into insignificance, apart from a nearby **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* at Fleetwood (Lancashire) which stayed from 12th to 17th March, a day when many southern-based birders found themselves driving north again, this time to Colwick (Nottinghamshire) to add a **Bufflehead** *Bucephala albeola* to their lists. Full marks to whoever looked skywards at Colwick on 18th to note Nottinghamshire's earliest-ever **House Martin**. Numbers of **Black-throated Divers** *Gavia arctica* reached 16 at Strangford Lough (Co. Down) on 20th March, the highest-ever day-count for Northern Ireland. On the same day, a movement of **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* passed through England, with up to 12 reported by the month end.

Throughout March, concentrations of **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* were building up, perhaps totalling 150, including 18 on the Kingsbridge Estuary (Devon), 45 on Jersey (Channel Islands), 22 on the River Lynher (Cornwall) and 15 on Thorney Island (West Sussex). **Garganeys** *Anas querquedula* were still scarce, with just 12 or so, and about 40 **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* moved through. Up to a dozen **Great Grey Shrikes** had been reported during January and February, numbers in March increasing to 19. The last five days of March were unsettled, with frequent rain, although 29th and 30th were quite warm, with 18°C in Kent. This no doubt helped several more early migrants to feel at home, and by 1st April **Aretic Terns** *Sterna paradisaea* had reached Cheddar Reservoir (Avon), **Pied Flycatchers** *Ficedula hypoleuca* were in Surrey, and a **Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* was in Hampshire, the earliest-ever record there. On Tresco, an **American Black Duck** *Anas rubripes* appeared, to take up residence, staying through to 1995.

Dungeness maintained its near monopoly of **Short-toed Treecreepers** *Certhia brachydactyla* when one was found there on 3rd April. Frequent northwesterly and northerly winds during the first half of April discouraged most migration from the south. They did not, however, stop seabirds moving towards their nesting ledges, and estimates of 8,000 **Common Guillemots** per hour past Westray (Orkney) on 7th must have been impressive. A ridge of high pressure brought an improvement in the weather on 10th and

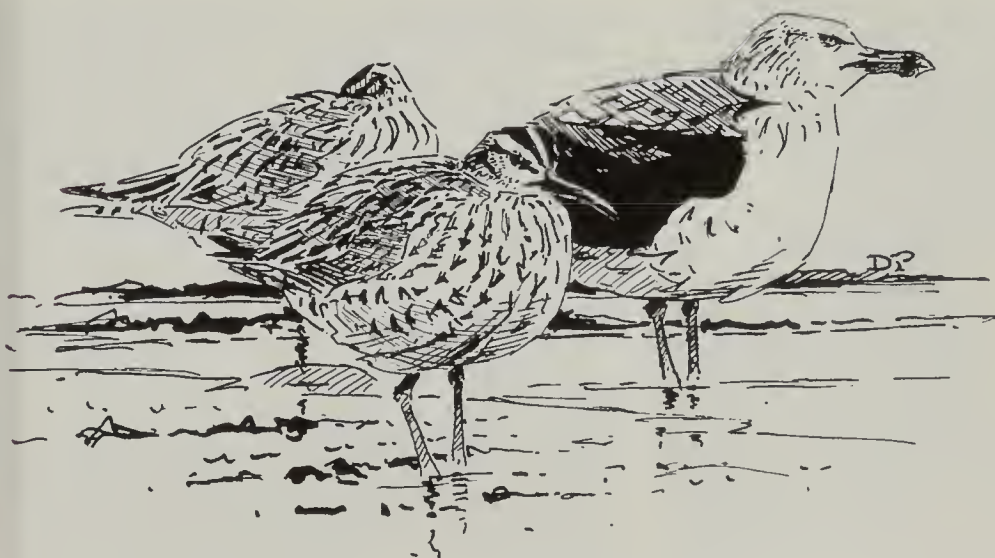
11th, a **Ross's Gull** to Hartlepool (Cleveland) and the only **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* of the spring to Blencogo (Cumbria). A **Great Bittern** at Portland Bill (Dorset) on 14th was only the second record at that bird observatory, as was a **European Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* there on 16th. **Garganeys** were more apparent from mid April, with about 16 reports, and about 60 **Ospreys** showed, mainly after 20th April. Concentrated falls of migrants during April were few, with **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* prominent in those that occurred, including 600 at Portland Bill on 12th, 300 there on 20th, and 300 also at Church Norton (West Sussex) on the same day. With the dramatic drop in their breeding numbers in southern England, we have to ask where they went from there.

A rush from the south

Between 18th and 21st April, it became somewhat warmer in the south, and on 22nd-23rd temperatures rose above 18°C for the first time in the month. Almost immediately, reports of southern rarities accelerated, with a **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* in Northamptonshire (what a good spring that county had), a **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* in West Sussex, both on 19th, a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* in Dorset on 20th and a **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala*, the first of six spring records, in Norfolk on 21st. A **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* appeared over Tresco on 22nd; there were to be three others elsewhere before the end of the month in what was to be a very good year for this species. How long before a pair settles down to breed? **Alpine**

Swifts *Apus melba* appeared in Kent and Suffolk on 23rd April, with another three by 27th. A scattering of **European Serins** *Serinus serinus* (plates 130 & 131) raised hopes of a few staying to breed, and good numbers of **Little Gulls** *Larus minutus* appeared on the London reservoirs on 23rd, with eight at King George V, 16 at Staines and 12 at King George VI. On the same day, 20 **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* were seen along the south coast of England, but they were totally eclipsed by counts of 'commic' **Terns** *Sterna hirundo/paradisaea*, with 5,340 off Hove (East Sussex) in four hours and 5,500 past Seaford (East Sussex). About 200 **Pomarine Skuas** were seen in the last ten days of April, peaks being 17 past Portland Bill on 25th and 60 past Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) on 27th. In Cumbria, however, where the spring passage of Pomarine Skuas has been well monitored in recent years, mostly low numbers were reported, with only about 100 by the end of May. Passage of **Arctic Skuas** *Stercorarius parasiticus*, on the other hand, was above average. Perhaps compensation for those ardent seawatchers was a massive count of 12,000 **Kittiwakes** past Bowness-on-Solway during the spring.

Dotterels *Charadrius morinellus* appeared in a rush, after three on Holy Island (Northumberland) on 24th April, with 18 in South Yorkshire on 29th and a good scatter elsewhere in northern localities. Wader passage, though, had generally been unremarkable, with even the normally common species thin on the ground. Exceptions were **Grey Plovers** *Pluvialis squatarola*, with flocks reported from many



inland counties, and **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus*, with several flocks of up to 100 during the second half of the month.

An exciting May

On the whole, May was dry and sunny in the north, and wet and dull in the south. The average monthly pressure was above normal over Scandinavia, and below normal in the Southwest Approaches, and so easterly and southerly weather patterns were more frequent than usual. This was to have a significant effect on the variety of migrants arriving on the east-facing coasts and the Scottish islands in the second half of the month. In general, western and northern Europe was cooler than normal in May, and much of Russia was also cooler than normal. The first three days of May were, however, rather warm, especially over England and Wales, appropriate for the six **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* in Avon on 1st, and the start of a mini-invasion of **Whiskered Terns** *Chlidonias hybridus*, with one at Bredon's Hardwick (Hereford & Worcester) and others in West Sussex on 2nd, Abberton Reservoir (Essex) on 3rd, Dungeness on 5th and two at Roekland Broad (Norfolk), which later flew inland to Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire). Typically, four **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* were discovered in May, with the first at Pennington Marsh (Hampshire) on 2nd, and the more-regular waders were appearing, including 416 **Whimbrels** at Rye Harbour (East Sussex). **Dotterels** reached a peak of 20 in Cumbria, and there were to be about 200 reported in May, mostly during 7th-14th, including 16 near St Albans (Hertfordshire), 20 on The Long Mynd (Shropshire) and 16

at Danby Beacon (North Yorkshire). More southern migrants included a **Black Kite** at Cromer (Norfolk) on 2nd, the first of about 12 to appear by mid May, and **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco vespertinus*, with four in England in the first half of the month, followed by seven in the second half, mostly along the south and east coasts of Britain. Of greater significance were eight in Ireland during 3rd-25th May: there had been only 12 previous Irish records. **Subalpine Warblers** *Sylvia cantillans* appeared in Cornwall and on Lundy (Devon) on 2nd, the first of an incredible 21 in May, with nine arriving during 10th-15th.

May is often a 'southern heron' month and 1994 was no exception, with about 24 **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea* appearing, mostly during 1st-6th, and also 21st-28th. **Little Bitterns** *Ixobrychus minutus* showed on Treseco on 5th, with others on St Mary's (Scilly) on 8th, in Lothian on 11th and Gwent on 15th. With a **Squaeco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* also on Treseco on 3rd, it was possible to see in Scilly six species of heron in one day—**Little Bittern**, **Squaeco**, **Purple**, **Grey** and **Night Herons**, and **Little Egret**. In particular, 1994 was to be a record year for **Squaeco** and **Purple Herons**.

Not to be outdone, Fair Isle (Shetland) was also setting records, not just in having its sunniest month ever; 49 black **Carrion Crows** *Corvus corone corone* on 5th May was the highest Fair Isle observatory count of the nominate race.

About 40 **Montagu's Harriers** *Circus pygargus* passed through southern England in two waves, during 3rd-8th and 13th-19th May. **Ospreys**, too, were moving through, with about 80 during the month. A **Honey-buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* near Moira (Co. Down) was the first record since 1965 for Northern Ireland.

From 9th May, pressure rose strongly to the north of Britain and, until 27th May, easterly winds covered the country. These gave a more autumnal feel to the species lists. A fall on Fair Isle on 12th-13th included 15 **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica*, 60 **Common Redstarts** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, 150 **Northern Wheatears** and 20 **Pied Flycatchers**. A **Corn Bunting** *Miliaria calandra* was only the second Fair Isle record since the 1970s.

It was to be a good year for passage **Golden Orioles** *Oriolus oriolus*, though not for the East Anglian breeding population, with a peak of 22 on Scilly on 6th May, and about





Plates 130 & 131. European Serin *Serinus serinus*, Southwold, Suffolk, April 1994
(R. Chittenden)



Plate 132. Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*, Felixstowe, Suffolk, October 1994
(Alan Tate)



Plate 133. Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1994 (Rob Wilson)

Plates 134 & 135. Below, Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, Cley, Norfolk, October 1994 (R. Chittenden)





20 in the southern counties of Ireland. Continuing with the eastern feel, a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* on St Agnes on 9th May was the first spring record for Scilly, surprising in view of the autumn numbers there. It arrived with two **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* and a **Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* on nearby St Mary's.

A **Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* on North Ronaldsay on 10th May was only the second for Orkney, and other unusual passage wader records included two **Stone-curlews** *Burhinus oedipnemus* at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) on 11th. A **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* at Cley (Norfolk) on the same day was the first of six spring records, with perhaps the most interesting of these being one at Elmley (Kent) seen carrying nesting material.

Pomarine Skuas passing the English south coast reached a peak on 13th May, with 148 reported, including 66 past Hove and 81 past Dungeness. **Temminck's Stints** *Calidris temminckii*, too, showed well, with about 70 reported, mainly during 12th-16th and 19th-22nd May. Two in Cumbria on 16th were the first there in spring since 1988.

A **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* at Hexham (Northumberland) on 14th May arrived on the same day as a **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* at Boddam (Shetland), of which there were others on Fair Isle on 15th, St Kilda (Western Isles) on 17th and then five more during 21st-26th May. Arriving with these **Rustic Buntings** were at least 114 **Bluthroats** (plate 129), during 10th-24th, 27 **Marsh Warblers** *Acrocephalus palustris*, 29 **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina*, 72 **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio* and 17 **Common Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus*, all during 21st-31st May, and most making their landfall between the Kent coast in the south and Fife in the north. Adding extra spice to the list were **Thrush** **Nightingales** *Luscinia luscinia* at Dungeness on 18th, Donna Nook (Lincolnshire) on 22nd and Gullane (Lothian) on 25th, a **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus*

dumetorum at Kergord (Shetland) on 23rd and a **Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* on Copinsay (Orkney) on 25th. A **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* at Penlee (Cornwall) on 29th saw May out in real style.

Despite a disturbed westerly airflow over Britain for the first week of June, easterly migrants were still being found, with a **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* in Kent, the year's second **Bufflehead**, a first-summer male in Cleveland on 1st, and a **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* on Foulney Island (Cumbria) on 3rd frustrating would-be observers during its three-day stay with its on-and-off appearances.

Following a massive irruption into central Europe, **Rosy Starlings** *Sturnus roseus* reached Britain, too, with one at Spurn (Humberside) on 4th June, followed by at least another seven at scattered locations in June, and seven more in July and early August. A **Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* at Beachy Head (East Sussex) on 5th June continued the recent spring trend for this species, but with it most of the migration came to an abrupt halt as a cool northwesterly flow covered much of Britain. It was the sunniest June since 1989 over England and Wales as a whole, and since 1975 locally in the South.

The breeding season—ups and downs

Many of our scarcer species did rather well. A joint census of **Dartford Warblers** *Sylvia undata* by the RSPB and English Nature revealed 1,600-1,670 breeding territories in southern England. In northeast Hampshire alone, there were about 100 pairs, the highest since the 1930s, and in Surrey 155 singing males was the highest total ever recorded. On those same Hampshire heaths, about 100 pairs of **Common Stonechats** *Saxicola torquata* were mapped, the most ever recorded. Again in Hampshire, 71 pairs of **Wood Larks** *Lullula arborea* were found, the highest level since 1981. As with Dartford Warblers, there is also evidence of their spreading into new areas, breeding just west of London and in Bedfordshire, despite the ever-present danger from human disturbance. Two juvenile Wood Larks in Derbyshire was the first record there since 1976. In Scotland, 95 pairs of **Ospreys** reared 146 young, and the reintroduced **White-tailed Eagles** *Haliaeetus albicilla* raised five young. For the first time since the start of the reintroduction scheme, a pair of Scottish-raised White-tailed Eagles also attempted to breed. **Red Kites** in

Wales had their best year this century, with 106 pairs raising 98 young. Red Kites from the reintroduction programme reared 13 young from eight pairs in Scotland, and 37 young from 20 pairs in England. In Norfolk, **Montagu's Harriers** had their best year since 1924, with nine pairs raising ten young. On a sadder note, **Corn Crakes** *Crex crex* failed to breed in Northern Ireland for the first time (ever?), but, following a change to more crake-friendly farming methods, singing males increased on Coll, to 18, and on Tiree, to 126. Also on a down note, **Stone-curlews** were badly affected by poor spring weather, with just 87 young being reared compared with 102 in 1993. The most unexpected breeding event of the year (of the century?), however, was the successful pairing of the long-staying **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* at Stithians Reservoir (Cornwall) with a **Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, resulting in three hybrid young, one of which survived into 1995.

The start of an excellent autumn

Towards the end of June, migrants started to trickle through, although it was two gull reports that first caught the eye, with a **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* at Topsham (Devon) on 25th June and yet another **Ross's Gull**, at Workington (Cumbria), the next day. An influx of **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* occurred from the end of June through to October, including wandering parties of eight in Clwyd, up to ten in Cheshire and Merseyside and six in Cornwall. Whether or not they came from a wild source is open to question. (Further details will be published in a forthcoming paper in *British Birds*.)

The first three days of July were hot and humid, and two long-standing absences were broken, with a **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* at Titchwell on 1st, the first in Norfolk since 1868, and an **Alpine Swift** at Noup of Noss on 2nd, the first in Shetland since 1977. A very unseasonal **Redwing** *Turdus iliacus* appeared in Scilly on 5th and a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* in Humberside on 10th, in what was to be a quiet year for the species. The amazing saga at Tynemouth (Tyne & Wear) continued on 11th July when a **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* was heard, and then trapped on 23rd and 25th July, the same individual as that in each of the preceding four years (*Brit. Birds* 88: 342-345).

Numbers of **Great Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax carbo* reached 516 at Rutland Water (Leicestershire) on 15th July, and **Little Gulls** 242 at Seaham Harbour (Co. Durham) on 16th. A **River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* during 16th-25th in Fife renewed hopes of the species' long-anticipated colonisation of Britain (another long-stayer was to appear in 1995). A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* arrived at Keyhaven Marsh (Hampshire) on 17th July, one of only two to appear this autumn and on a somewhat early date, as was a **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* at Holm (Orkney) on 18th. A **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* at Rutland Water from 21st to 24th July coincided with a weekend when there was little else around and was rightly popular. The next rarity was another Nearctic wader inland, a **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii* in Northamptonshire on 31st July. During the month, winds from a southerly quarter were more frequent than usual. It was strongly anticyclonic throughout the month over much of Europe, and Britain and Ireland were on the periphery of a record-breaking hot July on the Continent. In eastern, southern and central England, it was the hottest July for 11 years, no doubt encouraging the growing number of **Little Egrets**, which by 19th July reached 150 around our shores.

Large numbers of **Yellow-legged Gulls** *Larus cachinnans* included 100 at Rainham on 3rd August, and high counts of **Tufted Ducks** *Aythya fuligula* from the London reservoirs included 1,198 on Girling on 5th and 1,049 on King George VI on 21st August; elsewhere, equally impressive was a count of 4,395 on Rutland Water on 16th. A **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata*, found at Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) on 6th August, stayed long enough to be twitched from afar, but most of the more usual waders were thin on the ground. Exceptions were **Black-tailed Godwits**, which moved through many inland counties in above-average numbers, and impressive inland counts of **Ruffs** *Philomachus pugnax* and **Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius hiaticula*, including 86 at Staines Reservoir on 16th—but where were all the **Spotted Redshanks** *Tringa erythropus*, which were almost entirely absent? About 16 **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* were reported in August, with the first in Cumbria on 10th, and **White-rumped Sandpipers** appeared at Frodsham (Cheshire) on 11th and in Kent on 12th. Up to 15 **Spotted**

Crakes *Porzana porzana* were found, mostly in the Southwest, including three at Marazion (Cornwall), whilst a **Little Crane** *P. parva* performed at Stanpit Marsh (Dorset) on 17th.

Smaller-than-usual numbers of the large shearwaters were seen in August, with 15 **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* past Gwennap Head (Cornwall) on 1st the only noticeable movement off English coasts. In Ireland, 56 went past Cape Clear Island on 23rd and 60—the same birds?—passed Mizen Head (Co. Cork) on 24th, where two **Madeira/Cape Verde/Soft-plumaged Petrels** *Pterodroma madeira/feae/mollis* occurred on the same day. Fewer than 20 **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis* were reported, all of those during 19th–28th August. Totally overshadowing those two species, however, were **Sooty Shearwaters** *P. griseus*, with perhaps 1,000 in total, including 50 past Pendeen (Cornwall), and over 200 past Rocky Point (Co. Donegal) on 28th, where observers also counted 128 **Pomarine Skuas**. Most of the **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus* had passed by early in August, perhaps 450 in total, with the biggest single-day counts from Hartlepool Headland, with 19 on 10th, Whitburn (Tyne & Wear), with 17 on 14th, Hound Point (Lothian), with 29 on 13th, and Chanonry Point (Highland), with 76 on 14th.

The first half of August had been rather humid and thundery, with widespread storms, followed by a brief spell of cool north-westerlies. Around 14th, a low-pressure area developed over the Baltic Sea, bringing northeasterly winds on its northern flank. The low was quickly replaced by high pressure over Scandinavia, which stayed put until 27th August. It was land-based rarities that attracted the attention away from seawatching, and most of these, in the second half of August, came from an easterly direction. A **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* in Cleveland on 14th arrived on the same day as an early **Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris* in Scilly, and then a **Greenish Warbler** on Fetlar on 18th heralded the first of the real autumn falls. On 21st August, 200 **Northern Wheatears** were on North Ronaldsay, and there were good numbers of **Pied Flycatchers** in Scilly, mixed in with **Whinchats** *Saxicola rubetra* and **Spotted Flycatchers** *Muscicapa striata*. Of the 37 **Wrynecks** reported, most arrived after 21st, as did most of the **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria*, with about 70 during 20th–31st August. **Icterine Warblers** added to the

Scandinavian flavour, with about 40 during 22nd–31st. Another **Citrine Wagtail**, and **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* on Fair Isle, **Greenish Warbler** in Grampian, **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* on Stronsay (Orkney), and **Thrush Nightingale**, **Booted Warbler** and **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* in Shetland all added spice to the already impressive roll call.

Meanwhile, **Little Egrets** (plate 137) had continued to increase throughout August, reaching a national total of about 400. A series of counts at Poole Harbour peaked at 83 on 31st, there were 75 at Longville Marsh, Jersey, on 26th, and at Thorney Island regular counts of over 70 during 19th–31st peaked at 94 on 27th. A census in Devon on 30th revealed a county total of 85.

During September, a westerly, cyclonic type of weather persisted until the middle of the month. It was generally cool, dull and wet, and was the third poor September, in weather terms at least, in succession. Not so the birds!

September opened with a week of changeable westerly winds and the result pleased the wader buffs. A **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* in Devon on 4th was followed by about 46 **Pectoral Sandpipers**, mostly in the first half of the month, and 20 **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis*, all arriving during 1st–16th and including one well inland at Draycote Water (plate 138). Earlier, on Fair Isle, a juvenile **Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* had been found dead, on 31st August, but that of course had arrived on a different track. Another **Citrine Wagtail** appeared on Fair Isle on 1st September, and there were to be four others in the Northern Isles during the month. A **Greenish Warbler** at Wells (Norfolk), also on 1st, was followed next day by a modest fall on Portland Bill of 247 **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava* and 140 **Northern Wheatears**.

On 3rd September, excitement in Leicestershire was caused when seven **Arctic Skuas** flew over Eye Brook Reservoir, and at nearby Rutland Water the count of **Great Cormorants** increased to an amazing 785. On Jersey, **Little Egrets** had increased to 93 by 4th, and a census of **Barn Owls** *Tyto alba* revealed an island population of about 100, probably as many as Jersey can support. Staying with the Channel Islands, a **Cory's Shearwater** on 5th was only the second Guernsey record. Large numbers of **Sooty Shearwaters** were still passing our coasts, with 209 at Flamborough Head



Plate 136. Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*, Winterton/Horsey, Norfolk, November 1994 (R. Chittenden)



Plate 137. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Gweek, Cornwall, November 1994 (Paul Hopkins)

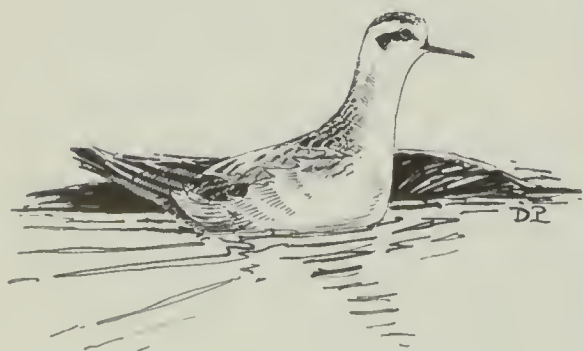
Plate 138. Below, Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Draycote Water, Warwickshire, September 1994 (Rob Wilson)



(Humberside) on 1st and 253 there on 14th September. Other good counts included 143 off Uisaed Point (Strathclyde) on 9th and 207 past the Farne Islands (Northumberland) on 14th. A **Booted Warbler** wrested attention away from the sea at Cromer (Norfolk) on 4th, and there were two **Arctic Warblers** on North Ronaldsay, on 4th and 7th. **Blue Tits** *Parus caeruleus*, not often mentioned in these summaries, warranted attention at Gibraltar Point, with a count of 480 on 6th September, and two **Yellow-breasted Buntings** arrived, at Hilbre (Merseyside) on 7th and Fair Isle on 9th. A depression then centred over the north of Scotland caused swirling westerly winds onto Atlantic-facing coasts, resulting in good seabird passage. On 10th, a **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* was seen off the Calf of Man (Isle of Man) and inland three more **Arctic Skuas** were seen, over Chew Valley Lake (Avon), and **Manx Shearwaters** *P. puffinus* reached Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. **Leach's Storm-petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* also featured prominently, one reaching Derbyshire for that county's first record for five years, and Cumbria had its best passage of this species since 1988. During 9th-11th September, some very impressive counts were made elsewhere, including 200 past Merseyside, 140 off the Lancashire coasts, 90 off Strathclyde, 470 past Ramore Head (Co. Antrim) and 200 off Co. Donegal. The movement was over as quickly as it started. Caught up in the same rush were **Grey Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius*—no surprise there—with over 60 reported during 9th-19th September, many reaching the shelter of inland waters. Although 155 **Pink-footed Geese** *Anser brachyrhynchus* at South Walney (Cumbria) on 14th gave an early reminder of the winter months ahead, many observers were relishing the prospects of what was to continue to be an excellent autumn.

Excitement knows no bounds

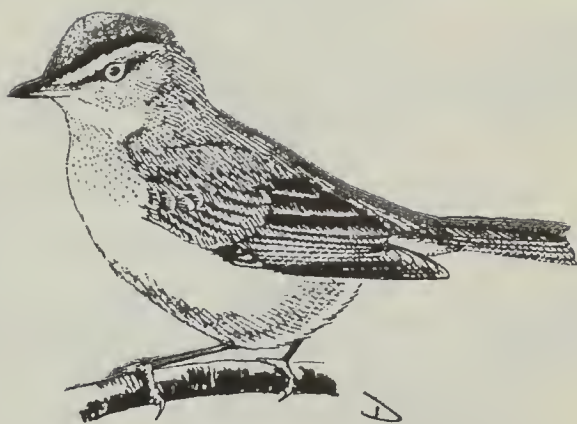
During 14th-18th September, a depression of unusual intensity tracked across the eastern North Sea and then lay over Denmark and southern Sweden. Air circulating over the northern edge of this low concentrated landfalls in the northern part of Britain. The first of four **Pechora Pipits** *Anthus gustavi* was found on Fair Isle on 15th, with another on Foula on 18th, and a **Thrush Nightingale** was in Lincolnshire on 17th. A **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* in Cleveland, also on 17th, was the forerunner of another five before the end of September, all in the Northern Isles, apart from a second in Cleveland on 18th. At Filey (North Yorkshire), a **Yellow-breasted Bunting** on 18th was the first of some real gems at that site during the autumn. Another was on Fair Isle the same day, with an **Arctic Warbler**, of which there were two more there on 20th-21st, and three more elsewhere during 21st-22nd September. The highlight in this busy period for many observers was a male **Siberian Thrush** *Zoothera sibirica* at Burnham Overy (Norfolk) on 18th. On a slightly more sober note, a spectacular movement of hirundines included 10,000 **Barn Swallows** going to roost at Clumber (Nottinghamshire) on 18th and a heavy coastal movement in Avon comprising 12,000 **Barn Swallows** in two hours on 19th together with 10,000 **House Martins**. Three **Lanceolated Warblers** *Locustella lanceolata* were found during 19th-21st, the last at Mundesley (Norfolk), an **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* on Whalsay (Shetland) on 20th, a **Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra* on St Kilda on 21st, with a **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* on Fair Isle the same day. Arriving with these premier stars were lower-division performers, but still impressive in their own right. Nearly 150 **Wrynecks** were noted throughout the month, including 22 in Norfolk alone during 1st-6th, and there were six **Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* during 17th-24th, and 50 **Richard's Pipits**, mainly after 20th. Most of the 13 or so **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris* arrived earlier, during 6th-18th, but **Icterine Warblers** arrived in two separate movements, the first involving 27 individuals during 1st-6th and the second involving about 20 during 14th-25th September. After mid month, about 28 **Red-breasted Flycatchers** arrived, together with 115 or so **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus* (plate 133), mainly during 17th-30th September.



The interest did not stop just with passerines. There was a **Baird's Sandpiper** on South Walney on 14th September, a **Wilson's Phalarope** in Norfolk on 16th, a **White-rumped Sandpiper** in Strathclyde, another **Baird's**, at Eye Brook Reservoir, and a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* at Sheringham (Norfolk), all on 17th. Seabirds, too, were having another surge, with 11,000 **Northern Fulmars**, a **Cory's Shearwater**, 101 **Sooty Shearwaters**, and 35 **Arctic**, four **Pomarine** and 11 **Long-tailed Skuas** past North Ronaldsay on 29th September. Thrushes were arriving, with the first substantial falls of **Redwings**, including 800 on North Ronaldsay on 30th, but a **Dark-throated Thrush** of the nominate red-throated race, which graced The Naze (Essex) from 29th September to 7th October, caused a lot more excitement.

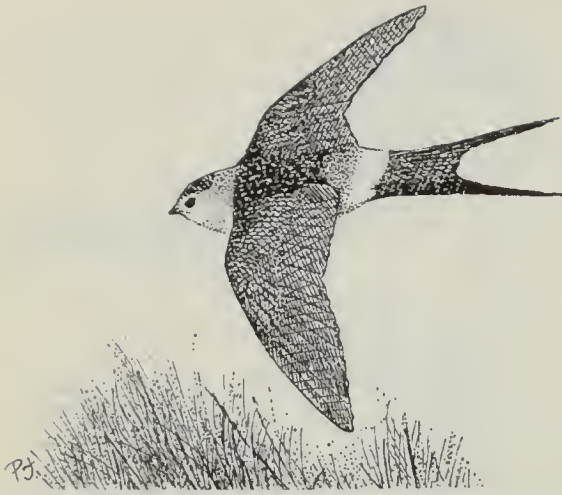
October was, from a weather point of view, a tale of two halves. The first half, up to 18th, was anticyclonic, dry with some warm days, and the second half was cyclonic, wet and then rather cold. From a birding point of view it was, however, the same story throughout the month: excitement following excitement. A post-breeding gathering of 50 **Stone-curlews** at a Breckland site in Suffolk on 1st October was untypical, and a **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* on Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire) was a good inland find on 4th. With the predominance of easterly winds throughout the autumn, transatlantic passerines had been absent, so a **Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus* on Mizen Head on 8th was a surprise. A **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* at East Prawle (Devon) on the same day quickly focused attention back to the east, as a ridge of high pressure developed across the centre of Europe, bringing southeasterly winds to Britain during 6th-10th. There was another **Dusky Warbler**, on South Uist (Western Isles) on 10th, and an amazing 19 more by the year's end, with 14 of those during the period from 11th October to 7th November.

Frustrated observers in Scilly, in what had been a quiet autumn for them so far, listened in vain to news from the mainland, first about the **Pechora Pipit** at Filey on 9th October and then almost unbelievably about the **Lanceolated Warbler** there the next day. A **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* at Portland on 11th and an **Arctic Warbler** at Kenidjack (Cornwall) tried to steal the spotlight away from northeast England, but those Scilly observers had to make do with a **Slavonian**



Grebe *Podiceps auritus*, only the fourth record this century for the archipelago, and one of the month's three **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola*, all on 10th-11th and including an unexpected East Coast record at Cley (Norfolk) (plates 134 & 135). Many observers left Scilly on 15th October, heading for the Northwest as news flashed through of a **Song Sparrow** *Zonotrichia melodia* at Seaforth (Merseyside) and a **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* at Rockcliffe (Cumbria). The latter was to stay into November, proving to be very popular with the estimated 1,600 birders who made the journey to see it. **Radde's Warblers** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* on Scilly and in Kent on 14th were about to be overshadowed by the biggest invasion of **Pallas's Leaf Warblers** *P. proregulus* (plate 132) we have witnessed. Overnight on 15th/16th October, cold air extended southeastwards from Greenland. Over southern Sweden the temperatures fell to 0°C, and yet it was more than 10°C higher over northern Germany. This cold band of air stretched right across the north of Scotland and the Northern Isles during 16th-18th October. Small passerines seeking more favourable conditions would have been swept west to arrive in eastern England rather than Scotland and the Northern Isles.

About 180 **Pallas's Leaf Warblers** arrived between 14th October and mid November; the previous best annual total was 127 in 1982. The normal peak arrival time is the second week of October, but this movement came significantly later, with about 65 arriving during 16th-23rd October and then about 75 during 3rd-6th November. One possible reason for this was that a vast area of above-average temperatures stretched from the eastern Mediterranean (up to 35°C) through central Russia to northeastern Siberia, presumably causing many of the local bird populations to delay their migration. In the



first wave, 28 made landfall in eastern England, 16 in northeast England, five in western England and Ireland, three on the English south coast, five on mainland Scotland and yet only three in the Scottish islands. In Suffolk, at least 21 were reported, almost as many as had been previously recorded in the county (27 to the end of 1993), with 14 seen in the Felixstowe area alone. Record books were being modified, then transformed and then totally rewritten. In November, during 3rd-15th, a total of 37 Pallas's Leaf Warblers was found in eastern England, 25 in Scotland, 16 in northeast England and ten each on the English south coast and in western parts of England.

The Continental anticyclone retreated very slowly during 18th-20th October as active fronts encroached from the west, but from 21st onwards pressure was constantly low over Britain and Ireland. There was a strong southeasterly flow across the North Sea, with a weather front on 20th stretching along the East Coast from Scotland to Norfolk. A depression was centred over the Northern Isles from 23rd to the end of October.

Remarkably, following closely on the 1993 Dorset record, two more **Red-flanked Bluetails** *Tarsiger cyanurus* came to southern Britain, the first at Great Yarmouth (Norfolk) during 18th-20th October and the second, at Landguard (Suffolk), on 26th. Is this species really extending its range, or are these 'vagrants' from a more dubious source?

Arriving with these eastern gems came a huge influx of over 100 **Rough-legged Buzzards** (plate 136), the second-largest on record. The first arrivals, on 15th October, focused on East Anglia and the southeast corner of England, with groups of up to five lingering in favoured localities, such as the Norfolk coastal belt and the Isle of Sheppey

(Kent). Many stayed on, and, with further new arrivals supplementing their numbers, about 75 were reported during November.

Another significant influx involved the nominate Continental race of the **Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, the largest ever recorded. The vanguard was on Hoy (Orkney) on 16th October and by the end of the month 50 had been seen on North Ronaldsay, and there were parties of up to ten on other Orkney islands. About 120 arrived in Shetland, including 19 at Helendale and 15 at Kergord on 26th and 15 at Quendale on 27th October. On Fair Isle, 56 were trapped (compared with only 41 during the previous 45 years). Further sightings extended along the eastern coast of England as far south as Suffolk, where one was trapped at Bawdsey on 1st November.

Few American thrushes made it across the Atlantic this autumn, but 16th October saw a true 'East meets West' situation: **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* on North Hoy (Orkney) was only a few kilometres away from a **Dark-throated Thrush** on Fair Isle.

Britain's fourth **Yellow-browed Bunting** arrived on St Agnes (Scilly) on 19th October, and on 22nd there was another flurry of eastern rarities in the Northern Isles. On Sanday, a **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* was Orkney's third, a **Paddyfield Warbler** was only its second and a **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* made a fine trio. Another **Paddyfield Warbler** was on South Ronaldsay on 23rd, and there were **Pine Buntings** on Out Skerries (Shetland) on 22nd, Sumburgh on 23rd and North Ronaldsay on 28th October. Another **Pied Wheatear** was in Kent on 23rd, with others at Fagbury Cliffs (Suffolk) on 24th October and in Cleveland on 6th November. Also in Suffolk, a southerly movement of **Wood Pigeons** *Columba palumbus* at Landguard between 24th October and 6th November was estimated at nearly 84,000, with a maximum of 30,160 passing over on 2nd November. By contrast, a solitary **Blue Tit** on Fetlar on 25th October was the first in Shetland since 1990. Landguard also witnessed the start of an interesting series of **Red-rumped Swallows**, with one on 26th, followed by one in Kent on 28th, then two in Clumber Park (Nottinghamshire) on 29th, with three there between 30th October and 3rd November. Possibly the same trio then turned up at Brancaster (Norfolk) on 6th November, staying until 11th. During 1st-15th November, a juvenile also visited various localities in north Norfolk and finally there was one in

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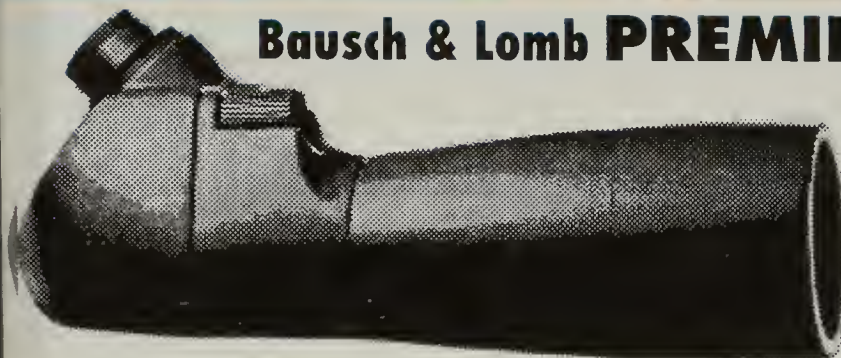
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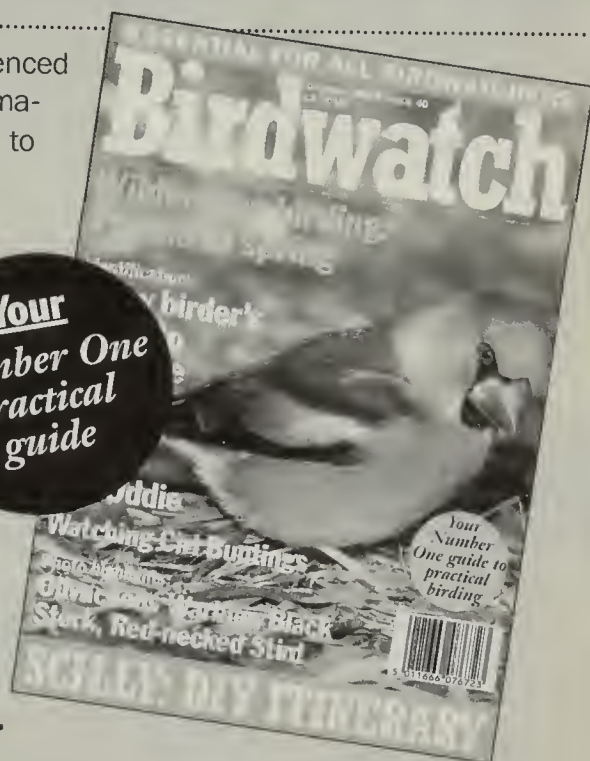
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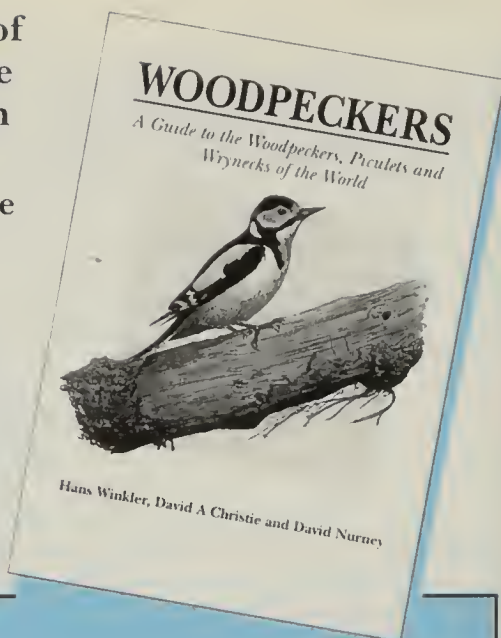
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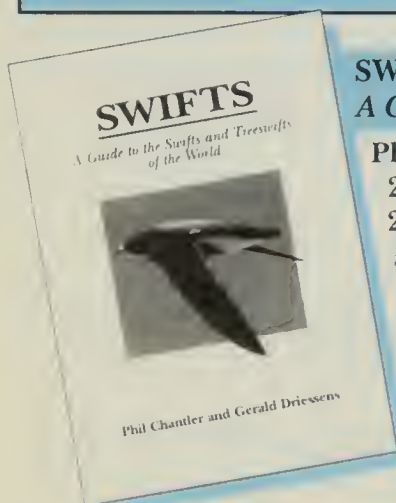
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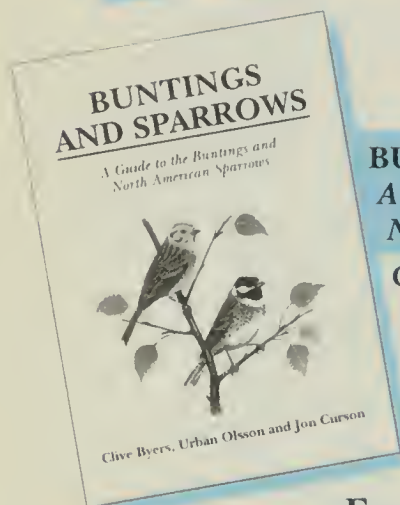
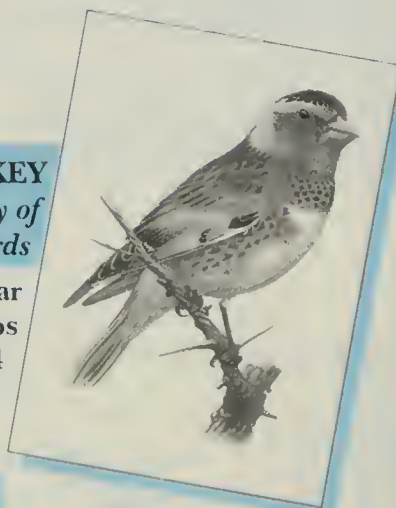
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Northumberland during 18th-20th November.

An **Arctic Warbler** on Fair Isle on 26th October was the eleventh of the year, while a **Radde's Warbler** in West Sussex, also on 26th October, with another Radde's in Suffolk on 2nd November, were by contrast only the third and fourth of the year. The eighth **Pechora Pipit** of the year duly arrived on 27th October, unexpectedly on Tresco: Scilly 'came good' in the end.

A wave depression, starting life on 28th October, tracked across from Newfoundland to northern Britain, reaching us on 29th October. Most American migrants had already pushed south and so were unaffected, but it managed to bring with it two **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** *Coccyzus americanus*, one found near St Davids (Dyfed) on 30th October and another at Carncastle (Co. Antrim) on 31st, and probably two **Yellow-rumped Warblers** *Dendroica coronata*, one at Ramsey Island (Dyfed) and another found on 16th November in Bristol (Avon). Unfortunately, an **American Robin** *Turdus migratorius* at Felixstowe on 2nd November was found recently dead.

Four **Horned Larks** at Colwick on 3rd November was only the fifth occurrence in Nottinghamshire, and 120 **Common Scoters** *Melanitta nigra* passed through the same locality on 4th, the same day as four **Penduline Tits** appeared at Titchfield Haven (Hampshire) and a **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii* began a week-

long stay at Landguard. A **Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax* brought more fireworks to Fair Isle on 5th November, staying only to the next day, as did a **Desert Wheatear** at Weybourne, appearing on 5th and visiting Cley on 6th. Southerly and southwesterly winds blew during November almost without a break. It was the warmest November since before 1659 and it was also very dry, so presumably this and subsequent Desert Wheatears found conditions here to their liking.

A **White-billed Diver** off Southwold (Suffolk) on 6th November was an unexpected southern English record. On 7th there was another **Desert Wheatear** at Castleton (Herefordshire) and yet another at Blackpool (Lancashire) on 11th November. A count of 588 **Northern Shovelers** *Anas clypeata* on Walton Reservoir on 10th was a new Surrey record, and a **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* at Lechlade (Gloucestershire) was, not surprisingly, a new record for that county, too. An **Alpine Accentor** *Prunella collaris* in Lincolnshire on 14th, staying until 17th November, was much sought after, but the year had one more ace to deal. Just over 13 years since the previous and so far only British record, a **Grey-tailed Tattler** *Heteroscelus brevipes* frequented a Grampian shoreline, at Burghead. Found on 27th November, it was added to many a grateful observer's life list until it departed a month later.



Plate 139. Birders at Landguard, Suffolk, November 1994 (R. Chittenden)

A couple of good Irish records in December, 71 **Slavonian Grebes** on Lough Foyle (Co. Londonderry) on 6th and at least 80 **Black-throated Divers** at Ballyvaughan (Co. Down) on 15th, straddled the discovery of a **Blackpoll Warbler** *Dendroica striata* well inland at Bewl Water (East Sussex) on 10th. It stayed until 20th December, no doubt encouraged by the mild, wet and sunny weather which prevailed for much of the month. It was the warmest December since 1988.

Finally, after a year crammed to excess with mainly eastern exotica, we finish with news of some adopted exotica of our own. At a roost

at Walton (Surrey), the count of **Rose-ringed Parakeets** *Psittacula krameri* reached a staggering total of 697.

Acknowledgments

We are most grateful to the numerous individual correspondents, national, regional, county and local societies, and bird observatories, whose information has been used to compile this summary. We are especially grateful to the British Birds Rarities Committee and the Irish Rare Birds Committee for complete information on their nationally accepted major rarities.

Barry Nightingale, 7 Bloomsbury Close, Woburn, Bedfordshire MK19 9QS

Keith Allsopp, 137 Redbridge, Stantonbury, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK14 6DL



The inclusion of plates 127-138 in colour was supported by Carl Zeiss Ltd, sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee.

Appeal to all bird recorders, bird-club secretaries and bird-observatory wardens

In order to make these annual reviews a complete reflection of the year's major happenings, and not just those associated with rarities, we would like to receive as many local reports, bulletins, newsletters and observatory reports as possible. Please send them to Barry Nightingale at the address above.



LOOKING BACK

'Burrow-chat, Wheatear or White-rump, *Saxicola Oenanthe*. Abundant on the sand links along our coast, where it arrives early in the spring, and breeds in the deserted rabbit-holes . . . It is delicious eating, although in this neighbourhood it is neglected as a luxury for the table.

'Common Golden-crested Regulus, *Regulus cristatus*. Some remain with us all the year . . . and vast numbers migrate from the north of Europe. It seems really wonderful that so diminutive a bird should be capable of such a long flight. For this reason, the common people of Hartlepool name it "tot o'er seas." ' (*The Zoologist* 3: 1058, 1059, October 1845).

'The Ornithologist in Heligoland . . . this little island is the only part of the world of which the ornithology has been properly worked. Every little boy on the island is a born and bred ornithologist. Every unfortunate bird which visits the island has to run the gauntlet of about forty guns, to say nothing of blow-pipes and catapults. The flight and note of every bird is familiar to every islander. A new species is immediately detected. The fisherman steers with a gun by his side; the peasant digs his potatoes with a gun on the turf and a heap of birds on his coat. The common birds are eaten, the rare ones sold to the bird-stuffer, and the new ones taken to Herr Gätke. Long before sunrise the island is bristling with guns; after dark the fowlers are busy with their nets, and at midnight the birds commit suicide by dashing against the lighthouse . . . the wonder is not that so many species of birds have occurred on Heligoland, but that so many have hitherto escaped detection.' (*The Zoologist* Third series 19: 363-364, October 1895)

In a purple patch in October 1970, two new Nearectic species were added to the British & Irish List: Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea* found in the Porth Hellick area of St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, on 4th October by Barrie Harding, Dave Holman and Ray Turley, and a Veery *Catharus fuscescens* found at Porthgwarra, Cornwall, on 6th October by Giles Dunmore and Howard Medhurst (*Brit. Birds* 65: 45-49, 155-158, 351, 352; *Ibis* 114: 446).



MONTHLY MARATHON



As noted last month, the closing dates for the last three hurdles (plates 97, 111 and 126) are all 15th October 1995, so the answers will be given next month. This month's hurdle is shown below (plate 140).

The current leaders in this competition are Jon Holt (Buckinghamshire) and Peter Sunesen (Denmark), both of whom have achieved 15-in-a-row sequences of correct answers. Perhaps the deadlock will be broken by one of the three outstanding pictures (the sixteenth to eighteenth hurdles), which involve five separate identifications.

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Plate 140. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 112: either nineteenth stage in seventh 'Marathon' or first, second or third stage in eighth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. *Read the rules on page 65 of the January issue*, then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th November 1995.

Philadelphia Vireo: new to the Western Palearctic



J. F. Dowdall

On 12th October 1985, while birding on Galley Head, Co. Cork, with J. Adamson and P. A. Cummins, I discovered an unfamiliar bird feeding with some Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* and Goldcrests *Regulus regulus*. The initial view of its bluish 'cap' and greenish upperparts made me suspect Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*. When the bird turned around, however, and revealed its lemon-yellow underparts, I realised that it was a species unfamiliar to me. We watched it for as long as was possible before we had to leave to catch the ferry to Cape Clear Island. Aboard the ferry, we met several other birdwatchers and we were able to refer to the *National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (1983). From this guide, we were able to make a tentative identification of Philadelphia Vireo *V. philadelphicus*, although this book warned that Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina*, a species which I had not seen, could be similar. That night, however, when I saw the photograph of Philadelphia Vireo in the *Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds* (1977), I became certain of the identification. We revisited Galley Head the following day, along with several other birdwatchers, and the identification was confirmed.

The Philadelphia Vireo remained in the area until 17th October, and it was seen by a large number of observers. It was also photographed (*Brit. Birds* 79: plates 10-11; 88: plates 141-143). It is likely that it had been in the area since at least 7th October, when there was a report of a possible Red-eyed Vireo from the same location.

The following description of the bird is compiled from the descriptions submitted to the Irish Rare Birds Committee:

SIZE AND STRUCTURE Slightly larger than Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, perhaps about the size of a Wood Warbler *P. sibilatrix*, but with a completely different structure. It was rather stockier, with a deep-bellied appearance, and noticeably short-tailed. The tail was notched.

PLUMAGE Forehead and crown soft bluish-grey. Prominent white supercilium running from base of the bill onto the ear-coverts, broadest above and behind the eye. Dark eye-stripe from base of the bill, through the eye and onto the ear-coverts. Below the eye, an obvious white line almost acted as a mirror image of the supercilium. This was broadest directly below the eye and created a distinctive 'pale-faced' appearance. Lower 'cheeks' warm yellow. Mantle and rump uniform, light olive-green. Wings also predominantly olive-green, but outer greater coverts had pale fringes and slightly paler tips, forming an indistinct wing-bar. Inner webs of greater coverts and tertials darker, sepia; primaries and primary coverts

also this colour. Uppertail uniform light sepia, with paler outer tail feathers. Undertail dark. Throat and upper breast warm yellow, with rest of the underparts entirely washed yellow, although not so bright as the throat; a slight olive suffusion on the sides of the breast.

BARE PARTS Bill short but rather fat and quite broad-based; predominantly dark, although greyish towards the base, and the extreme tip was also pale. Legs dark grey. Eye dark and rather prominent owing to the pale-faced appearance.

HABITAT AND BEHAVIOUR The bird frequented tall Sycamores *Acer pseudoplatanus*, although it did on occasions move down into the undergrowth, which consisted mainly of Escallonia *Escallonia macrantha* and Fuchsia *Fuchsia magellanica*. Its behaviour was rather like that of a *Hippolais* warbler, alternating between bursts of activity and spells of lethargy. It regularly remained motionless for several minutes at a time, often making it difficult to locate.



Plate 141. Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*, Co. Cork, October 1985 (R. T. Mills)



Plate 142. Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*, Co. Cork, October 1985 (R. T. Mills)

The record was accepted by the Irish Rare Birds Committee as the first for Ireland (Brazier *et al.* 1986). It is also the first record for the Western Palearctic. The file was sent to Will Russell, who fully endorsed the record. He commented as follows: 'Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus* can be washed with yellow on the flanks and lower belly, but lacks the bright yellow on the throat and chest, and more importantly lacks the dark line between the bill and eye, giving the bird a blank-faced appearance. Red-eyed Vireo of the yellow tropical race *flavoviridis* could be that yellow below but is larger and has a big, noticeably hooked bill as well as a far more contrasting face and greyer back. Other vireos have wing-bars.'

The Philadelphia Vireo has a breeding range that extends from southern British Columbia and southern Alberta in the west to Newfoundland and northern New England in the east. It winters in Central and South America (Bull & Farrand 1977).

Robbins (1980), predicting potential future Nearctic vagrants to Europe, rated Philadelphia Vireo as the thirty-second most likely candidate out of his top 38. It had a rather low predicted number of 0.91, against 4.86 for the 'most likely' species, Grey Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*. October 1985 was, however, exceptional for American landbirds in Britain & Ireland, with at least 45 individuals of 18 species, including Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla* and Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*. The exceptional number of Nearctic landbirds was preceded by Ireland's first Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*, on 30th September. There were also records of Nearctic passerines in the Netherlands and France.

The Galley Head Philadelphia Vireo was followed less than two years later by the first British record of the species: one on Tresco, Isles of Scilly, during 10th-13th October 1987 (Brodie Good 1991). To date, these are the only two records for the Western Palearctic.

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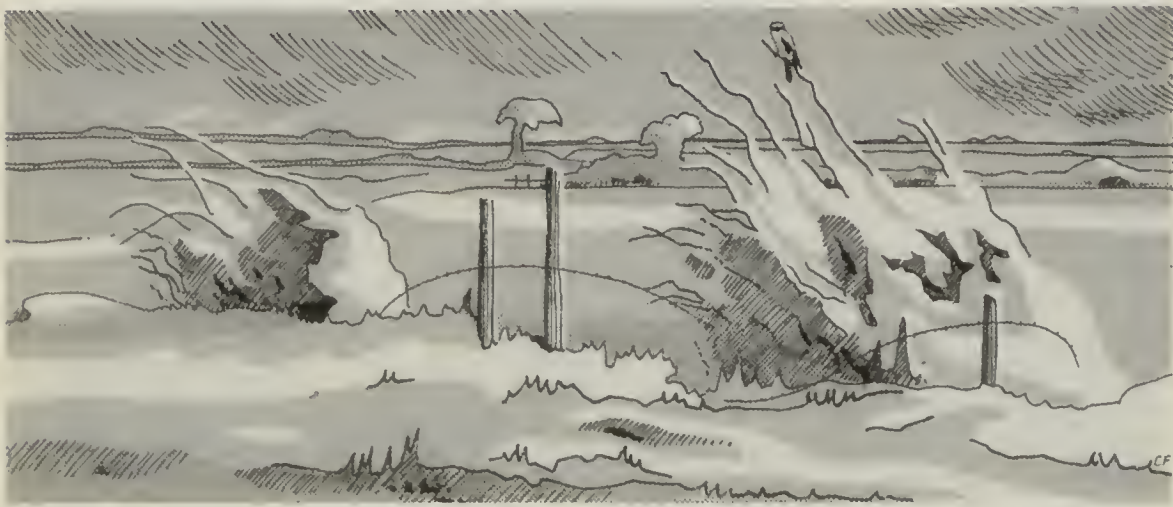
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J. F. Dowdall, Kinnoull Hill, Garristown, Co. Dublin, Ireland



Plate 143. Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*, Co. Cork, October 1985 (R. T. Mills)

Status of the Great Grey Shrike in Britain and Ireland



Peter Fraser and John Ryan

The Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* is a widespread Holarctic species. The nominate race breeds from Scandinavia and France east to western Siberia, northern populations exhibiting a winter dispersal or short-distance migration to warmer areas, including Britain and Ireland (Cramp & Perrins 1993). Its status in these last countries has not been investigated in detail until comparatively recently.

This paper attempts to estimate the current numbers of this attractive shrike visiting these islands.

Historical perspective

In the first half of the twentieth century, when there were far fewer observers than there are today, records of Great Grey Shrike in Britain seemed to be rather scarce. Bannerman (1953) suggested that the Great Grey Shrike might be 'even [an] annual visitor to our shores'. Two decades later, it was described as both a passage migrant and a winter visitor in 'small, rather variable numbers', being most numerous on the East Coast in October, with most wintering individuals occurring in Scotland (BOU 1971). The first systematic attempt to assess the British wintering population was made during 1981-84, with the *Winter Atlas* (Lack 1986): records were found to be much more widespread in midwinter than had previously been supposed, and the wintering population was estimated at a minimum of 150 individuals.

In Britain, the Great Grey Shrike has long been characterised by considerable annual fluctuations in its numbers. The available records nevertheless suggest that there has been a general decline over the last 40 or more years, and particularly since the 1970s. Several previous traditional wintering areas, such as in Hampshire (Clark & Eyre 1993) and south Staffordshire (R. A. Hume *in litt.*), are no longer being occupied by Great Grey Shrikes. The evidence from Scotland

also suggests that the species is less common than formerly in that country: a total of over 140 autumn records in 1970 (with at least 70 individuals overwintering) had dropped to around 100 in 1982 (Thom 1986).

The species remains a great rarity in Ireland, with a total of only 13 recorded during 1966-86 (Hutchinson 1989). Only one was discovered in Ireland during survey work for the *Winter Atlas* (Lack 1986).

Methods

In order to make a quantitative assessment of the numbers and distribution of Great Grey Shrikes in Britain & Ireland in winter, we searched all local, regional and national bird reports for the years 1986-92 and extracted all records of the species. A total of some 890 published records was collated and analysed, and their distribution plotted according to vice-counties.

The records were initially classified into three groups: (i) site-faithful long-staying wintering individuals; (ii) short-staying East Coast autumn migrants; and (iii) all other records. Predictably, those records which fall into the third group posed the biggest analytical problems. Of the 890 records, 534 (60%), a much higher percentage than might be suspected, referred to individuals seen on one day only. These could fall into any of the three groups; most are autumn migrants (see below), but they also include individuals on well-known wintering sites which were seen only intermittently, as well as 'one-off' records at other localities.

In estimating the wintering population, we started with those individuals which were long-staying territory-holders, which we defined as those recorded staying for longer than ten days. In addition, we included those shrikes which, although seen for as little as just one day in the winter (December-February), were observed regularly in the same area in more than one year in the period under review. These records indicate that individuals were probably resident in the area, but were being under-recorded.

The remaining records (the vast majority) are of short-staying individuals not associated with regular wintering areas. We categorised these as follows:

1. Individuals recorded before December, seen for less than ten days and away from known wintering territories: these are mostly coastal migrants.
2. Individuals recorded in December-March inclusive, seen for less than ten days and not on a regular basis from year to year: these we have called 'winter wanderers'.
3. Records in spring/summer from April onwards.

Results and analysis

The annual totals for each category are shown in table 1. The figures are calculated for each winter period (i.e. autumn to spring) rather than for each calendar-year. The four different categories are considered separately below.

Winter residents

During 1986/87-1991/92, the number of Great Grey Shrikes wintering in Britain ranged from 28 to 51, with a mean annual figure of 37 (table 1). The two years with the highest number of individuals overwintering (1988/89 and 1990/91)

Table 1. Total numbers of Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* recorded in Britain and Ireland, 1986/87-1991/92.

Category	1986/87	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90	1990/91	1991/92	Mean
Winter residents	38	30	43	30	51	28	37
Autumn	38	36	71	29	70	70	52
Winter wanderers	18	17	21	19	29	22	26
Spring	18	9	29	9	10	1	13
Totals	112	92	164	87	160	121	

followed the ‘best’ autumns. Large autumn numbers do not, however, necessarily produce a large wintering population, as demonstrated by, for example, winter 1991/92.

The distribution of winter residents is shown in fig. 1. The New Forest, Hampshire, has the highest number of wintering Great Grey Shrikes in Britain. The next most favoured areas are, in approximate order of importance, the Dartmoor and East Devon commons area of south Devon, the Surrey heaths, Rauceby Warren in south Lincolnshire, and Kielder Forest in south Northumberland. Other important areas include the Loch Ken area of Kirkcudbrightshire in Galloway, Budby in Nottinghamshire, Breckland on the west Norfolk/west Suffolk border, and the Lee Valley area of Hertfordshire.

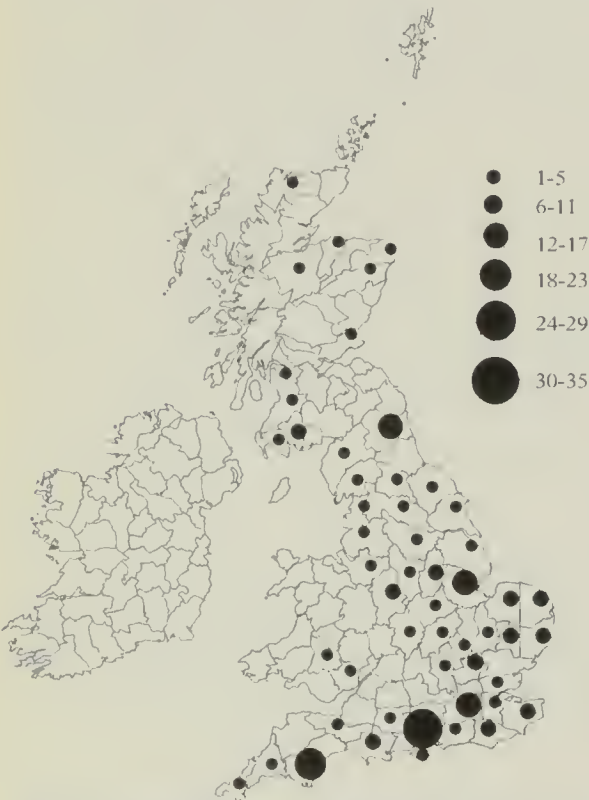


Fig. 1. Distribution in Britain, by vice-counties, of site-faithful, long-staying Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* in winter, 1986/87-1991/92.

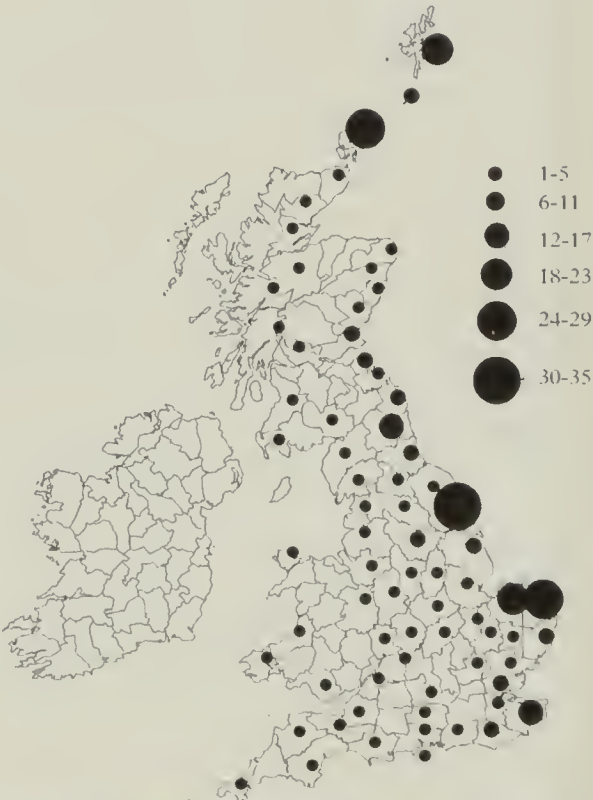


Fig. 2. Distribution in Britain, by vice-counties, of short-staying Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* in autumn, 1986-92.

Great Grey Shrikes have a catholic taste in habitat. The most favoured areas in the south coincide with the lowland-heath habitat preferred by the Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio* in its last decades as a breeding species in Britain, but young coniferous plantations are also popular. Otherwise, they occur in almost any habitat that is exposed and open, with sparse trees and bushes to allow vantage points.

Autumn passage

An annual average of 52 individuals was recorded in autumn, their distribution being shown in fig. 2.

The majority of autumn records are from the East Coast, with most from east and west Norfolk, southeast Yorkshire and the Northern Isles of Scotland. This pattern is typical of scarce migrants breeding in Fenno-Scandia, such as Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* and, especially, Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*. It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that most Great Grey Shrikes reported at this time of year are passage migrants. The most frequented sites in October and November are at the major East Coast migration stations: Spurn in southeast Yorkshire had a total of 15 records during 1986-92, followed by Flamborough Head with 11 and Fair Isle with nine.

Of interest in assessing the winter population is the number of records away from the coast in areas unfashionable for migrants. As mentioned above, the category 'autumn' does not include those individuals recorded in October and November in regular wintering areas (these are included within 'winter residents'). Of a total of 352 individuals recorded over seven autumns (1986-92), 230 were seen at migration watchpoints, leaving 122 observed elsewhere (an average of 17 per year). It may seem reasonable to call these latter birds casual winter visitors or 'winter wanderers' which, through lack of coverage or high mobility, are not knowingly recorded subsequently. Nevertheless, some of these must be genuine migrants. Somewhat arbitrarily, we have split this group into two, giving mean figures of 42 migrants and nine winterers.

The timing of the autumn migration of the Great Grey Shrike is shown in fig. 3. We have used data from the Northern Isles only, as this minimises the risk of the figures being distorted by the presence of irregularly observed winter residents. Of the 75 individuals involved, 55% (41) were recorded in October and another 16% (12) in November, with the peak in the last week of October.

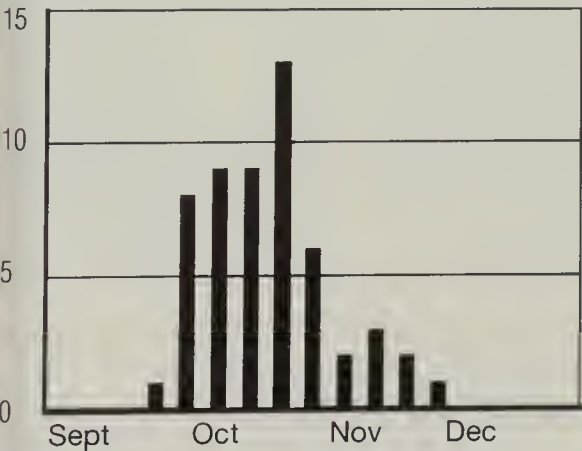


Fig. 3. Autumn migration of Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* in Northern Isles, Scotland, 1986-92. The period concerned, in seven-day periods, is week 36 to week 52 (records from week 39 to week 48), with peak during 22nd-28th October.

Throughout Britain, the species is extremely rare before the last week of September; during 1986-92, there were records of one individual arriving in July (Hoy, Orkney, 5th July 1991), one in August (Flamborough Head, 29th-30th August 1991) and two in the first half of September (Bere Regis, Dorset, 9th September 1990; Holme, Norfolk, 11th September 1989).

It might be anticipated that coastal sites would provide incontrovertible evidence for the continuing arrival of Great Grey Shrikes throughout the winter, but this is not the case. In the Northern Isles, there were records from Shetland (Channerwick, 4th January 1992) and Orkney (North Ronaldsay, 22nd February 1986); despite many winter records for coastal Norfolk, there was none for the Yorkshire 'migrant traps'. A correlation of high autumn numbers with high wintering numbers does not necessarily imply that individuals seen on the East Coast in October are the same as those seen inland later in the winter. The disparity between the autumn and winter figures in 1991/92 may in fact indicate otherwise. A successful breeding season could well produce the same effect, with the October migrants subsequently moving on to overwinter in southwest Europe.

Winter wanderers

Included in this category is a smaller number of individuals (annual mean 26) seen for only a short duration in the winter period (fig. 4). Their contribution to the general statistic is very difficult to assess.

In Scotland, there is a disproportionately high number of records in this category, which would imply that wintering shrikes are under-recorded.

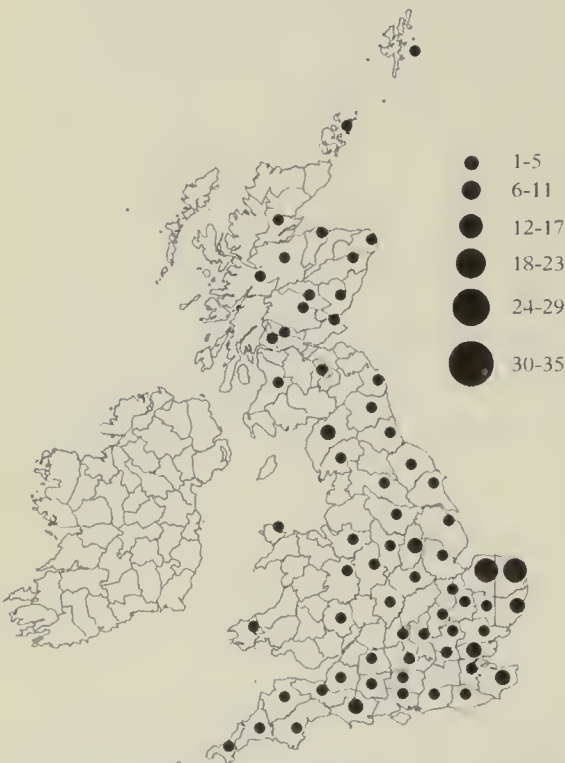


Fig. 4. Distribution in Britain, by vice-counties, of transient Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* in winter, 1986/87-1991/92.

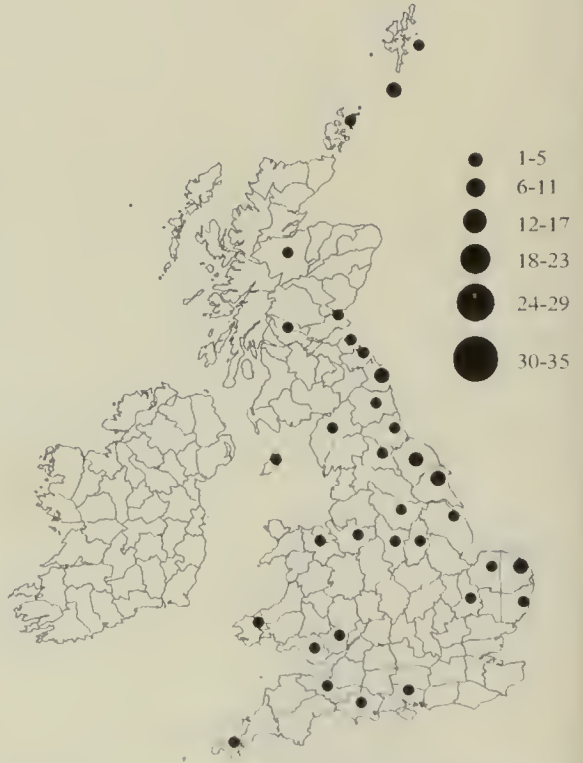


Fig. 5. Distribution in Britain, by vice-counties, of Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* in spring, 1986-92.

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Alternatively, some of the records could arise from shrikes wandering from known territories; or could include a completely unknown number of individuals showing facultative migration from the Continent during the winter. This last theory is possibly supported by the large number of records in Norfolk, where the level of observer coverage would lead to a higher percentage of winter residents being discovered. Thus, ‘one-off’ records in well-watched areas such as Norfolk are much less likely to be under-recorded winter residents than are such reports in, say, Scotland.

Spring passage

Records of Great Grey Shrikes in spring, from March onwards, comprise a mix of coastal spring migrants and individuals which could also be considered to be winter wanderers. Their geographical distribution is shown in fig. 5.

The existence of a spring migration can be seen from the pattern of records from the Northern Isles (fig. 6). This is further supported by the distribution of spring records, which are concentrated on the English northeast coast and the Scottish southeast coast, as well as in the Northern Isles (fig. 5).

Spring passage is not marked, however, with a mean annual total of only 13 individuals. May records are unusual, but include that of a Great Grey Shrike which stayed from 18th May until 8th July 1991 in Carlton Colville, east Suffolk. There were two June records, both in 1986: at Bellingham, south Northumberland, on 10th, and at Whitby, northeast Yorkshire, on 14th.

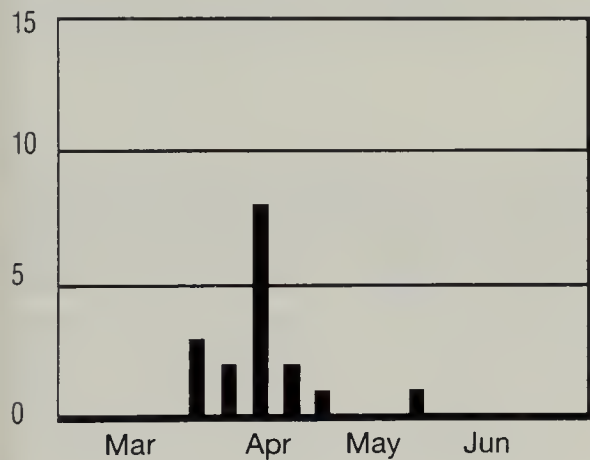


Fig. 6. Spring migration of Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* in Northern Isles, Scotland, 1986-92. The period covered, in seven-day periods, is week 10 to week 26 (records from week 14 to week 21), with peak during 16th-22nd April.

Conclusions

From the published data, it is possible to give an absolute minimum figure for the number of Great Grey Shrikes visiting Britain; and, using arrival and departure dates, the number present at any one time can be calculated.

Fig. 7 shows the average number of Great Grey Shrikes present in Britain in each week during the period 1986-92. There is no hard evidence that there are ever more than about 15 Great Grey Shrikes in Britain at any one time. We would assume, however, that this indicates how difficult the species is to record. More realistically, we would suggest the following figures:

Migrants An average of about 40 individuals recorded in autumn and 15 in spring.

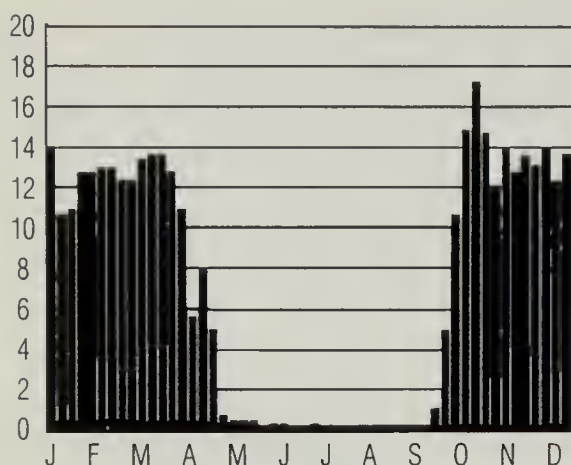


Fig. 7. Mean number of Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* present in Britain each week, 1986-92.

Winter visitors Around 35 individuals regularly hold territories each winter. In addition, an average total of 40 shrikes is recorded for short periods of time at various locations. The exact status of the latter individuals is impossible to determine. In Scotland, it seems likely that the species is under-recorded, while in England and Wales some duplication may occur if shrikes are roving over large distances during the winter. Currently, a figure of 75 seems to be an upper maximum for the number of Great Grey Shrikes recorded in winter.

Acknowledgments

We should like to express our gratitude to the network of observers, county bird recorders, report editors and bird clubs whose records made this paper possible. We should especially like to thank David A. Christie for his invaluable comments and his input to the drafts of this paper.

Summary

A total of 890 accepted records of Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* in Britain and Ireland was published in the county, regional and national bird reports for the years 1986-92. Analysis shows that, on average, about 52 were reported on autumn passage, mostly on the East Coast, about 63 overwintered, mostly in southern and eastern England, of which some 37 occupied territories and about 26 wandered more widely, and about 13 were reported on spring passage, mostly on the East Coast. In the Northern Isles, passage reached its peaks in late October and mid April. Taking account of duplication (especially in eastern England) and under-recording (especially in Scotland), it is conjectured that about 40 migrants usually occur in autumn and about 15 in spring, and that a maximum of about 75 individuals overwinters, 35 in large but static territories and about 40 more mobile and roving (or elusive) individuals.

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Dr John F. Ryan, Lynwood, Landeryon Gardens, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 4JN



NOTES

White Stork taking domestic ducklings

In 1992, in the village of Byshkiv in the Lviv region of Ukraine, I noted a White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* regularly taking domestic ducklings. While the ducklings, which were two or three weeks old, were swimming on the water, the stork moved sharply towards them and caught the nearest one in its bill. The stork then flew 50-70 m with the prey, landed, and killed it; sometimes the duckling was eaten immediately, but more frequently it was carried to the stork's nest 500 m away.

Taras V. Bashta

Lviv 290000, Chaykovskij 17, Institute of Ecology of the Carpathians, Ukraine

EDITORIAL COMMENT *BWP* (vol. 1) does include domestic duck under 'odd items' taken by White Storks.

Common Kestrel robbing female Eurasian Sparrowhawk

On 3rd November 1992, in a meadow near Halfweg, a village west of Amsterdam, Netherlands, I saw a female Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* catch a Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* on the ground. The latter uttered loud distress calls while the Sparrowhawk sat on it. Suddenly, a Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* appeared, uttering an aggressive cry. A brief quarrel ensued on the ground. The Kestrel, probably a female (events happened too rapidly to be certain), grabbed the Starling, still alive, from the hawk's talons and flew off with it.

Mostly during the last 25 or so years, several notes have been published in *British Birds* on Common Kestrels robbing other avian predators. The victims of these robberies were: Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* (64: 317; 66: 228; 67: 474-475; 85: 188); Barn Owl *Tyto alba* (61: 264; 72: 337); Little Owl *Athene noctua* (40: 216); Merlin *F. columbarius* (72: 336-337); and Eurasian Sparrowhawk, a male robbed of its small-mammal prey in flight (70: 35-36). My observation shows that a Kestrel was able to rob a much larger female Sparrowhawk without much difficulty.

Joh. J. Frieswijk

Gerard Terborgstraat 51 III, 1071 TL Amsterdam, The Netherlands

EDITORIAL COMMENT The importance of food-robbery by other raptors in the evolution of the eating behaviour of Eurasian Sparrowhawks is discussed in *The Sparrowhawk* (Ian Newton, 1986, pp. 107-110).

Migrant House Martins roosting on buildings

During 29th September to 5th October 1992, while my wife and I were staying at Calas de Mallorca, Spain, we observed the following. About 20 minutes before dark each evening, up to 2,000 House Martins *Delichon urbica* and a handful of Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* would congregate over the purpose-built resort and fly around in circles, calling loudly. During adverse weather, House Martins roosted on the roofs of the hotel buildings and on the lit sign of the Hotel America. On the night of 3rd October, I went around the four hotels; there were House Martins around each, and one which had closed for the season had many perched on the verandahs. I watched until it became too dark to see them, and assumed that they roosted for the night. The following evening, when there was a high wind and claps of thunder, an employee at the Hotel America allowed me (unofficially) to go up to the roof, where I found many House Martins perched on pipe work on the rooftop buildings. When asked if the birds were there often, the hotel employee replied that they were 'Here all the time'.

George A. Miles

Cerrig Cregin, Bryngwran, Holyhead, Gwynedd LL65 3RF

Common Redstart healthy despite deformed bill

On 19th October 1991, in Jerusalem, Israel, we trapped a young male Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* which had a smashed bill. Its upper culmen was not visible, while its lower culmen was curved downwards at 90°, parallel with its body (plate 144). It was clear that this was not a recent deformity. Since Common Redstarts do not breed in Israel, this individual must have been about five months old and must have migrated a few thousand kilometres. It had no fat, but its weight was normal and it flew perfectly.

Yoav Perlman and A. Gancz

Pinchas Rozen 7, Ramat Sharet, Jerusalem 96925, Israel



Plate 144. Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* with damaged bill, Israel, October 1991 (Y. Perlman)

Blackbirds roosting in old nests of Magpies

Over the four winters 1987/88-1990/91, during a study of roosting Magpies *Pica pica* in the suburbs of Århus, eastern Jutland, Denmark (Henriksen 1992), a total of 83 Magpie nests was monitored after dark. No Magpies used the nests for roosting, but, in 15 out of 44 watches at ten nests, single roosting Blackbirds *Turdus merula* were found, all during the period from 9th November to 6th February. The ten nests were 3-6 m above the ground in hedges and scrub on waste ground: eight in Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and one each in Downy Birch *Betula pubescens* and Goat Willow *Salix caprea*. All nests were roofed, and the Blackbirds always roosted inside them. Usually it was too dark to sex the individuals, but a male was involved at one nest used on five out of nine nightly watches. Neither Cramp (1988) nor Glutz & Bauer (1988) referred to this behaviour. It appears, however, that Blackbirds will use almost any thick cover for roosting (e.g. Snow 1958; Simms 1978; Stephan 1985), so why not occasionally the roofed stick nests of Magpies, too?

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Willow Warbler with ant's head attached to tarsus

On the morning of 23rd May 1991, following a fall of warblers on the Calf of Man, Isle of Man, I extracted from the mistnets a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* which appeared to have a papilloma some 3 mm in diameter on its left tibio-metatarsal joint. Closer examination revealed the lump to be the head of a large ant with its mandibles firmly clamped to the warbler's tarsus. The warbler's foot appeared swollen and lifeless, but, when inspected at the observatory, the swelling proved to be an accumulation of spongy necrotic tissue on the sole of the foot. Considerable force was required to prise apart the ant's jaws: the right mandible had penetrated deep into the tarsus, and on its removal the wound bled freely, although it showed no sign of sepsis. After the leg had been cleaned with a mild antiseptic, the warbler appeared bright and demonstrated a weak grip in its left foot. It was in remarkably good condition and weighed 9.4 g, compared with a mean of 8.2 g (range 6.9-9.5 g) for 20 Willow Warblers caught earlier that morning.

The ant's head was identified by the Department of Entomology at the Natural History Museum, London, as that of a worker *Dorylus nigricans*, a driver-ant from West and Central Africa.

N. V. McCanch and M. McCanch

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NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Where are the new RDBs?

It was in 1990 that the (then) Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) and the RSPB published *Red Data Birds in Britain*, identifying 117 species in need of 'our care and attention'. Knowledge relating to the status of some of these species was inevitably sketchy and the authors stressed the need to continue monitoring so as to review the situation in coming years. Several new publications since 1990 have presented the results of further monitoring, most notably two from BirdLife International in 1994, *Birds in Europe: their conservation status* and *Birds to Watch 2, the World list of threatened birds*.

It was at the April 1994 British Ornithologists' Union conference, on 'Bird Conservation: the science and the action', that Dr Mark Avery presented a paper: 'Revising the British Red Data List for birds'. We still seem to be waiting for the production of this revised list. It is a well-acknowledged fact that, since the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) started preparing international red data books, they have become a cornerstone for the work programmes of conservation organisations worldwide.

Agreement first time around seems to have been relatively straightforward; close working co-operation between the voluntary and statutory conservation organisations in the late 1980s resulted in the 1990 publication. The splitting of the NCC into national agencies seems to have resulted in some difficulties. We hear stories suggesting that, north of Hadrian's Wall, progress towards finally agreeing the list is advancing at a snail's pace. We all know that it is not possible totally to disentangle conservation from politics, but, surely, if a species clearly fits within one of the agreed criteria, then it should be on the list?

The message to all those working on the new list is 'Must get on with it!': produce it, and those who need it for their work can progress with some conservation actions.

Pica and Poyser support BIY

The Editorial Board is delighted to announce that the publishers *Pica Press* and *T. & A. D. Poyser* will be co-sponsoring 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' for at least the next three years, 1996-98. The winner, second and third will each be able to choose a total of 15 books from the *Pica Press*, *T. & A. D. Poyser* and *Academic Press* lists.

A big 'Thank you!' to *Pica Press* and *T. & A. D. Poyser*, and to Christopher Helm and Dr Andrew Richford who were instrumental in arranging this support for the BIY competition.

Christopher and Andy tell us that they are both 'Absolutely delighted' with the new arrangements.

New reserve in East Anglia

A new site, recently acquired by the RSPB, has exciting management potential. An area of the fens near Lakenheath, Suffolk, is to be converted from arable farmland into a wetland with a large component of reedbed habitat. With only 20 booming Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* in Britain in 1995, any potential new nesting site is to be welcomed.

Acquiring such a reserve is one thing, but we wonder how many reserve visitors know just how expensive it is to set up and manage (for ever!) a significant wetland nature reserve.

It is often possible to find people who will pay for the purchase of a reserve or people to pay for the purchase of a tractor. The difficulty comes with finding money for the diesel fuel to put in the tractor or for the pay for the tractor-driver.

Is this why the RSPB is now the only UK-wide conservation organisation to be acquiring and managing large-scale nature reserves? Even the RSPB, however, cannot continue to maintain expensive new reserves without extensive new funds.

Garden Bird Feeding Survey is 25 years of age

The 'new' BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch has achieved a remarkable response from BTO members and the general public, with literally thousands of garden birders expressing an interest in the project. As a research project, however, it is not entirely new, as its predecessor, the Garden Bird Feeding Survey, is now 25 years old. Based on (what is now a very small sample!) 247 plots, the winter of 1994/95 saw the Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* slip to 13th place, having been ousted by the Magpie *Pica pica*, now firmly in at number 12. In addition to showing declining flock size for House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*, the 1994/95 winter provided

further evidence of increases in Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*, Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* and Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, together with nationwide examples of Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caedatus* and Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis* feeding from nuts and seeds in hanging baskets. (Word has reached the N & c desk of Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *D. minor* behaving in a similar manner.)

Further information on the current BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch may be obtained from Tracey Brookes, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

Feeding garden birds in summer

With a growing interest in garden-bird feeding and study, it is worth noting that several organisations have recently advocated summer feeding as advantageous, or at least not detrimental to garden birds. Recent issues of the BTO's news sheet *The Bird Table* have debated the subject. A letter from Shelley Hinsley in *The New Scientist* (1st July 1995)

indicated the death of nestling tits *Parus* from whole peanuts being fed in the breeding season. Is it not a little too hopeful to expect the general public to know just what can and cannot be fed during the summer months? A safer message could be: Do not feed birds during the breeding season. No doubt the debate will continue.

English names

It cannot seriously be argued against that, in an ideal world, having a single English name for wildlife taxa, be it birds, mammals or plants, would be a wonderful thing. The debate, as we are all too aware, hovers around what is the acceptable English name.

We have just been looking through the long-awaited updated list of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) species under European Commission regulation no. 558/95.

If you think English names are a mess in the bird world, think again. It is bad enough trying to decide if *Pipile jacutinga* should be called Black-fronted Piping-Guan, Black-faced Piping Guan, Black-faced Curassow or Jacutinga, without worrying if *Saguinus oedipus* should be called Cotton-headed Tamarin, Cotton-top Marmoset, Pinche Marmoset, Liszt Monkey, Cotton-top Tamarin, Geoffroy's Tamarin or Rufous-naped Tamarin. Thank heavens for scientific names!

Map projections

At the 'N & c' desk, we have always taken it for granted that you open a bird book and there is a map showing breeding distribution, migration route or winter quarters. We have not really thought about it, and we suspect that most readers will, like us, have taken them for granted. We have heard of Mercator and his projection (a hangover from school days) and that is about it. The subject is explored in depth in the July issue of *Birding World*. The shapes of countries and continents may look a bit strange, but the arguments are strong for a cylindrical equal-area projection for distribution maps and an azimuthal equidistant projection for migration maps. It will be interesting to see how many publications take up the recommendations.

Lottery money for conservation

Over the years, three conservation organisations, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, the Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust and the RSPB, have owned and managed land on the Ouse Washes, Norfolk/Cambridgeshire. News has just been released by the RSPB that it has recently managed to purchase a significant area of land to reinforce one of the key 'sanctuary' areas within the site. Support for the purchase (over £250,000) has come from the National Heritage Memorial Fund (from the national lottery).

Concern had been expressed that lottery money would not be available for conservation. Let us hope that this is an indication of future sums being made available to safeguard land.

Britain awaits massive duck invasion

We have been browsing through a highly readable North American magazine, *Bird Watcher's Digest* for July/August 1995, and came across the following snippet, which should get us out scouring the beaches: 'Britain is bracing for a massive invasion of ducks. Little, yellow, plastic ducks. In January of 1992 twelve containers of the children's bath toys washed off a cargo ship in the north Pacific Ocean, and they have been paddling (well, floating, actually) toward Britain ever

since. They are expected to start arriving in 1997. A few have already been beached in coastal Alaska, but the bulk are expected to follow a route through the Arctic, moved by ocean currents and drifting pack ice. Scientists are monitoring the movement as a way of fine tuning models of ocean currents and ice movement. Those models are used in assessing weather, pollution and fishing forecasts.'

Italians and the Slender-billed Curlew

As we reported earlier (*Brit. Birds* 88: 444), a flock of approximately 20 Slender-billed Curlews *Numenius tenuirostris* was discovered wintering in southern Italy. Birders who had made the pilgrimage to Morocco in the hope of seeing the (perhaps) single bird must have been relieved that there were more.

Now we can expand on the good news. The birds were present for much of the first three months of 1995, on a wetland site in Apulia, the observations having been made and co-ordinated by INFS (Istituto Nazionale Fauna Selvatica). The site had previously been identified as an IBA (Important Bird Area) by BirdLife International, and, under a scheme to gain support, LIPU (Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli), the Italian BirdLife partner, has produced an information leaflet about the IBA programme in Italy and its implementation. Further details are available from LIPU, Vicolo San Tiburzio 5A, 43100 Parma, Italy.

Not good news from Bulgaria

Recent news from Bulgaria suggests that the government is intending to amend the Environmental Conservation Act to avoid having to undertake an environmental assessment prior to certain development projects. High on the list are plans for a nuclear-power plant on Belene Island, an Important Bird Area in the Danube river, and a scheme to transfer water to provide a supply for public use in Sofia. The latter will have a serious impact on the Rila National Park, as well as IBAs in Greece. It will involve a transfer of water between two catchment areas, those of the Struma and Iskar rivers. An important wintering area for the Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, Limni Kerkini, and the Strymonas Delta could both be affected. The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (2 Gagarin Street, BG-1113, Sofia) and the Hellenic Ornithological Society (PO Box 64052, GR-15701, Zographos) have joined forces to register complaints with the appropriate national authorities.

Discovery of Mascarene Shearwater

Hadoram Shirihai, Ian Sinclair and Peter R. Colston report on the discovery of a new species of shearwater, closely related to Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* and Audubon's Shearwater *P. lherminieri*, which they have named Mascarene Shearwater *P. atrodorsalis* (*Bull. BOC* 115: 75-87). The first was found

alive at Durban, South Africa, in January 1987, but subsequent records include one in the Western Palearctic, at Eilat, Israel, during 18th-21st June 1992, and the species is apparently locally abundant in the western Indian Ocean.

Another look at Hastings

The excellent *Dorset Bird Club Newsletter* devotes two full pages of its summer 1995 issue to a discussion of the 'Hastings rarities', debunked amidst great publicity in the August 1962 issue of *British Birds* (55: 281-384). The author, Mick Shepherd, concludes 'What a pity there was not a flourishing tabloid press in the 1930s—their cheque book journalism would surely have loosened tongues and unravelled the whole story.'

DBC Membership Secretary is Eileen Bowman, 53 Lonnen Road, Colehill, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 7AT.

Birding ethics

We have probably all seen the discussions in the ornithological journals and magazines: How far can birders go in their desire to see new birds?, and How much disturbance is or is not justified?

Your reporter must own up to going (perhaps) a little 'over the top' to get a decent view of a Little Crane *Porzana parva* in Bulgaria this spring, and felt distinctly guilty afterwards, even though it is doubtful if any harm was done.

Recently, however, the debate has become more scientific. How far are research workers allowed to go in carrying out their work? Are there any circumstances when experimentation that will lead to death is allowable?

We recently attended an interesting discussion where highly respected and knowledgeable ornithologists argued strongly that the collecting of specimens for museums should now be outlawed, but the same individuals would be prepared to allow large numbers of birds to be taken into captivity if undertaken in a sustainable manner.

Ethics is a very personal thing and we all have our own standards, standards that must at least take some note of the beliefs and concerns of others.

This topic received serious attention at the International Ornithological Congress in Vienna in August 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 122), but needs constantly to be kept in mind.

New nightjar

Legs in a stewpot (*Brit. Birds* 87: 239, 346) and now a wing in a wheel-track. The latest report on a bird species new to science concerns the Nechisar Nightjar *Caprimulgus solala*, described, from a decomposing roadside corpse found in southern Ethiopia in September 1990, by R. J. Safford, J. S. Ash, J. W. Duckworth, M. G. Telfer and C. Zewdie (*Ibis* 137: 301-307).

The Wirral, Montgomery, the World

The latest issue of the popular monthly *Bird Watching* features guides to The Wirral and to birding in Montgomeryshire, and has a special preview of the World BirdWatch on 14th-15th October. If any *BB* reader has difficulty in getting a copy from the local news-stand or newsagent, ring Dave Cromack or Chris Jones on 01733-264666.

George Dunnet

We are very sad to have to report the death in mid September of Professor G. M. Dunnet, first Chairman of The Seabird Group and widely known for his studies of the Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*.

Always busy, but ever-helpful with a cheery smile, George leaves his friends and former students with many fond memories. A full obituary will be published in *British Birds* in due course.

Access to Orford Ness

Since the National Trust acquired the site, Orford Ness, Suffolk, has not been open to formal visiting. On Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, until the end of October 1995, it will be possible to visit 'The Ness' by ferry, leaving Orford Quay at 30-minute intervals from 10.00 hrs to 13.30. There will be a maximum number of 96 visitors per day. Ferries, which cost £3 for NT members, £5 for non-members, should be pre-booked by writing in advance to Orford Ness Ferry, Walnut Tree Cottage, Orford, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 2NF.

Professor Ian Newton

Belated congratulations to Dr Ian Newton FRS, who was given the title Visiting Professor in Ornithology by the University of Oxford in July last year.

'The Wildlife Photographer'

We apologise for giving the wrong telephone number in the August issue (*Brit. Birds* 88: 390); it should be 01527-852357.

Change of Recorder's address

Jeffery J. Wheatley, County Recorder for Surrey, has moved to 9 Copse Edge, Elstead, Godalming, Surrey GU8 6DJ.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

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Don Taylor—*Southeast*

Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*

John Wilson—*Northwest*



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 14th August to 17th September 1995.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophrys* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 10th September.

Madeira/Cape Verde/Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae/mollis* Bridges of Ross (Co. Clare), 25th August; Kerry Head and Brandon Head (Co. Kerry), both on 26th August (possibly just one rather than three individuals).

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* Bridges of Ross, 25th August.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* Bridges of Ross, 25th August; Malin Head (Co. Donegal), 27th August.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* Influx of up to 50 from early August onwards.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* Sandwell Valley (West Midlands), 22nd-23rd August; Fair Isle (Shetland), 31st August to 1st September, 8th September and 17th September.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* Juvenile, Lowry's Lake (Co. Armagh), 5th-16th September (first for Northern Ireland).

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius* St Margaret's Bay (Kent), 19th August (potential first for Britain and Ireland).

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* Fair Isle, 13th-17th September.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Fair Isle 17th-18th August, 6th September; St Martin's (Scilly), 26th August; Tresco (Scilly), 27th-28th August, same or another 12th-15th September; Kelling Quaggs (Norfolk), 17th September.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* Kilbaha, Loop Head (Co. Clare), 14th-16th September.

Lanecolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* Cutts (Shetland), 10th September.

River Warbler *Locustella fluvialis* Lerwick (Shetland), 14th September; North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 15th September; Sumburgh (Shetland), 17th September.

Booted Warbler *Hippoboscus caligata* Sumburgh, 7th-10th September.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* About 21, mainly on east coast of England.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* Deerness (Orkney), 10th-16th September.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* Cape Clear Island, 14th-17th September.



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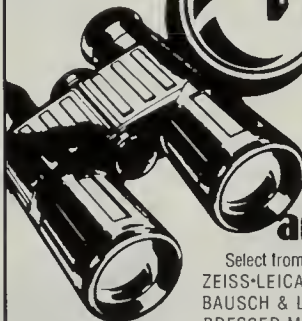
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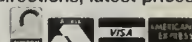
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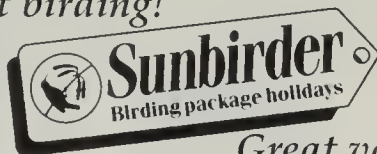
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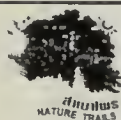
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SUNDAY 22ND
FAIRBURN INGS, CASTLEFORD

SATURDAY 28TH & SUNDAY 29TH
HAUXLEY NATURE RESERVE, NR. AMBLE

SATURDAY 28TH & SUNDAY 29TH
RSPB DUNGENESS

LANCASHIRE

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NOVEMBER

SATURDAY 4TH & SUNDAY 5TH
WWT CENTRE, ARUNDEL

SATURDAY 4TH & SUNDAY 5TH
TOPHILL LOW NATURE RESERVE, BEVERLEY

SUNDAY 5TH
PENNINGTON FLASH

SATURDAY 11TH
KENFIG NATURE RESERVE, MID-GLAMORGAN

SATURDAY 11TH & SUNDAY 12TH
WWT CENTRE WASHINGTON

SUNDAY 12TH
WWT CENTRE LLANELLI, DYFED

SUNDAY 12TH
FISHERS GREEN, LEE VALLEY COUNTRY PARK

SATURDAY 18TH & SUNDAY 19TH
WWT MARTIN MERE, ORMSKIRK

SATURDAY 18TH & SUNDAY 19TH
RSPB PULBOROUGH BROOKS

SUNDAY 19TH
ABBERTON RESERVOIR, COLCHESTER

SATURDAY 25TH & SUNDAY 26TH
WWT CENTRE WELNEY, WISBECH

SATURDAY 25TH & SUNDAY 26TH
CARSGINGTON WATER

SUNDAY 26TH
FAIRBURN INGS, CASTLEFORD

SUNDAY 26TH
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SOUTH WALES

TYNE & WEAR

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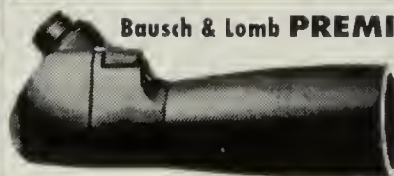
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Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1994

Michael J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee,
with comments by P. M. Ellis and A. M. Stoddart



As this thirty-seventh annual report of the Rarities Committee illustrates, the changing fortunes of rare birds visiting Great Britain continue to be sufficient to stimulate discussion and speculation, and sometimes, indeed, disagreement. Their appeal remains undimmed and the Report aims to meet the needs of the

wide variety of interests among rarity enthusiasts.

Our principal aim is straightforward: to provide as complete and accurate a record as possible year by year. This can then be used by those responsible for producing county and local bird reports, books, lists and papers, as the 'official' record of rare birds in our islands. The Rarities Committee forms part of an increasing international network of such committees and gains strength from that and from its widespread recognition as a model upon which others are based. We are conscious, of course, of the need to provide interest and entertainment: simply reading a report should be enjoyable in itself, and even ensuring that the names of those people involved in finding and identifying birds are included is something that we take seriously.

Then there is what might be called the scientific aim of recording rare birds. This relies on the completeness and accuracy already mentioned and it is the integrity of the Committee and its actions, and the attitude it takes towards reaching difficult decisions, that determines the value of its ultimate product. We are aware that decisions on some reports remain to be made after long periods of consideration, but prefer to take longer and get it right than to rush into a decision that may need to be reversed (perhaps, by then, too late to correct local or national publications, or even identification papers, based in part upon wrong assumptions).

Much of the value, however, depends upon analysis of the records, and we are sometimes criticised for having moved too far towards simple recording and away from useful analysis. This is a point worth making, but it must be said that the workload of the Committee, all of whose members do the job voluntarily and, supposedly, for the fun of it, is already large and there is no reason why others cannot use the published data for analytical work. Indeed, there is every reason

why they should: this is why we publish the records. We should all like to see more understanding of the changing patterns of rarities, but cannot necessarily take on the extra work ourselves. The data are there, however, presented in 37 detailed reports; and papers on the changing numbers, and geographical and temporal patterns of some Siberian vagrants (but not others), for example, are waiting to be written.

The membership of the Rarities Committee is listed each month on the inside front cover of *British Birds*, and changes in its composition are reported from time to time. In the past year, we held an election for a new member to fill the gap created by the retirement of the longest-serving one: it is disappointing to report that only two candidates were put forward, although the calibre of both is undeniably excellent. A further nomination for membership came about during the process of the election and in fact that nominee was later co-opted to fill the vacancy created by a subsequent resignation: nevertheless, we appeal for more nominations for the Committee for next year's election. We are also considering new ways to widen the electorate, which currently comprises the county recorders and observatory wardens.

Given the progress made last year in addressing the backlog of accounts of birds new to Britain & Ireland, we are pleased to report a continued level of publication of such papers in *British Birds* in our efforts to maintain a complete picture of the circumstances surrounding additions to the British List. Thank you to all observers involved in preparing these fascinating short papers. A few remain to be written, and observers are sometimes curiously unwilling to see their accounts in print. We urge anyone involved to supply a short text to the Managing Editor of *British Birds* as soon as possible. We also thank Dr David Parkin and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee for their continued close co-operation and the addition of comments regarding the reasons behind categorisation and the possible origins of the individual birds concerned. We maintain a close and productive relationship with the BOURC and look forward to its continuation: it is perhaps worth reminding readers that the Rarities Committee deals with verification of the identification of rarities, the dates of their occurrence and the naming of observers involved, while the BOURC steps in with 'firsts' and 'category changes' to double-check the identification and to assess the most appropriate status of new species for the British List. This involves researching escape likelihood, relevant weather and other circumstances, migration patterns and timing, vagrancy patterns elsewhere, and much more besides, in the attempt to make the correct decision (rather than merely using subjective guesswork or 'wishful thinking', which sometimes surface elsewhere).

There are a number of reports remaining in circulation at the time of writing. These include 30 records for 1994 and 38 from earlier years upon which a decision has not yet been reached, plus 33 for 1994 and four from earlier years received too late for inclusion in this report. We appeal to observers (and county and observatory recorders) to continue to submit reports as early as possible after each observation to spread and ease our workload and to ensure prompt attention. Our aim is to provide an efficient service.

Also remaining under consideration are six recent claims of Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*, which seem likely to include a mixture of good, bad and indifferent, and 17 reports of Citrine Wagtails *Motacilla citreola* from past years; we do

appreciate that the delays are frustrating for those who reported the occurrences. There are also 11 claims of South Polar Skuas *Stercorarius maccormicki* circulating in particularly weighty files but mostly making little progress (although several are undoubtedly of individuals seen poorly, or with described characters so peculiar that they seem unlikely ever to be acceptable) and some 30 reports of Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus* of the race *humei*. The review of reports of Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* has been completed and the results are presented within this report, while the review of records of Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* remains to be finalised.

It should be noted that a considerable number of changes have been made to the 1958-93 totals given in the heading to each species entry as a result of in-depth research since the last Report by the Committee's Statisticians, Peter Fraser and John Ryan; where relevant, appropriate amendments have been noted in the text.

Acknowledgments

The work of the Rarities Committee was once again sponsored by *Carl Zeiss Ltd*, to whom we remain indebted and extremely grateful. It is not an inexpensive exercise and this financial support is invaluable in maintaining the uniform, objective review of rare birds in Great Britain which the BBRC provides.

The Committee gratefully acknowledges special assistance with records from Dick Forsman, Peter Lansdown, Simon Harrap and Lars Svensson. The members of the Seabirds Advisory Panel (Bill Curtis, Jim Enticott, Steve Madge, Tony Marr and John Ryan) supplied valuable advice.

The species comments have been written by Pete Ellis (non-passerines) and Andy Stoddart (passerines), and the running totals were compiled by Peter Fraser and John Ryan. As in other recent years, two ex-members of the Committee, Peter Lansdown and John Marchant, volunteered to assist with checking the proofs of this Report.

We are indebted to Patrick Smiddy and the Irish Rare Birds Committee for their friendly help and agreement in allowing us to publish essential details of rare birds reported in Ireland. The Irish records have not been assessed by the BBRC but are wholly the responsibility of the IRBC. The long-standing agreement that they should form a part of this Report allows us to present a complete picture of the situation in the whole of Britain & Ireland. We greatly value this co-operation between the IRBC and the BBRC.

The BOURC has already been mentioned, but we thank that committee again for its co-operation during the year.

In particular, we express our warm appreciation of the work of the county recorders and bird-observatory wardens nationwide, without whose help this Report could not exist, and of course the observers who provided the records. Without their co-operation the Report could never be compiled, but at least they also have the enjoyment and excitement of finding the birds in the first place! While we envy them their luck, many submissions convey the pleasure they take in seeing good birds and remind us all that this is the core of the whole business, and that for most of us it is, after all, just our hobby.

RAH

Highlights

The year 1994 was often exciting (see *Brit. Birds* 88: 457-472), but was not outstanding for major rarities, though these included:

- 1st Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* of the red-throated nominate race
- 2nd Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (but several other earlier reports are still under consideration)

- 2nd Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*
 3rd Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*
 4th Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*
 4th Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*
 6th Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica*
 7th Song Sparrow *Zonotrichia melodia*

There were all-time record numbers of Black Kites *Milvus migrans* (26), Iceland Gulls *Larus glaucoideus* of the races *kumlienii* or *thayeri* (11, taking the total to 31), Pechora Pipits *A. gustavi* (8), Citrine Wagtails *Motacilla citreola* (7), Paddyfield Warblers *Acrocephalus agricola* (9), Dusky Warblers *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (21, but only 4 Radde's Warblers *P. schwarzi*), Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* of the race *pallidirostris* (4), Rosy Starlings *Sturnus roseus* (26) and Pine Buntings *E. leucocephalos* (5).

On the minus side, American passerines were few (including only three American wood-warblers), and there was not one Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*, a species which had registered only nine other blanks during the previous 30 years.

Three other 'firsts' included in this report relate to earlier years:

- 1st Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta* (in 1970; total now two)
 1st Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (in Ireland in 1913; total now ten)
 1st British Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* (in 1992, but four records involving 42 individuals in 1956 and 1958 are on the Irish List).

JTRS & PGL

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as in the 1993 report (87: 503-571). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled:

1. The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if photographed or tape-recorded (and this evidence seen or heard by the Committee); (5) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (6) date(s); and (7) observer(s), normally up to three in number, in alphabetical order.
2. In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the case of the very similar Long-billed *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus*, however, we are continuing to publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to those of pratincoles *Glareola*, albatrosses *Diomedea* and frigatebirds *Fregata*.
3. The sequence of species, English names and specific nomenclature follow *The 'British Birds' List of English Names of Western Palearctic Birds* (1993). Any sight records of subspecies (including those of birds trapped and released) are normally referred to as 'showing the characters' of the race concerned.
4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species' name refer respectively to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain & Ireland (excluding those 'At sea') (i) to the end of 1957, (ii) for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (iii) the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult and rather arbitrary, but the consensus of members is indicated by 'possibly the same' (counted as different in the totals), 'probably the same' (counted as the same in totals), or 'the same' when the evidence

is certain or overwhelming. An identical approach is applied to records of the same species recurring at the same locality after a lapse of time, including those which occur annually at the same or a nearby site. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee usually requires firm evidence before more than one is counted in the totals. A detailed breakdown of the

figures for previous years is held by the Honorary Secretary.

5. Irish records, assessed and accepted by the Irish Rare Birds Committee, are included separately, by special permission of the IRBC, following the subheading IRELAND.
6. The breeding and wintering ranges are given in parentheses at the beginning of each species comment.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 139, 6)

Fife Largo Bay, age uncertain, 16th-17th October (A. W. Lauder *et al.*).

Highland Gruinard Bay, probably adult, 1st February to 1st May (S. Blamire, D. M. Pullan).

Northumberland Hauxley, age uncertain, 1st September (I. Fisher, S. Sexton *et al.*).

Suffolk Southwold, adult, 6th November (W. J. Brame, J. M. Cawston).

Western Isles Balranald, adult, 17th May (S. Robson).

Yorkshire, North Scarborough, ♀, recently dead, 15th October, photo. (B. Cockerill, J. R. Mather), skin retained by J. R. Mather.

(Arctic Russia eastwards to Arctic Canada) A fairly average showing, with a typical set of dates, except for 1st September, and an unsurprising mixture of localities.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 16, 1)

Cornwall Sithians Reservoir, since 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 508), throughout the year, paired with Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, hatched three young by 9th July, two surviving to 15th October, one to 1995, photo. (per S. M. Christophers) (plate 147, on page 507).

Northumberland Warkworth Lane Pond, since 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 508) to 8th January, 8th-17th April; same, Druridge Pool, 11th January to 21st March, photo. (per B. N. Rossiter).

Scilly Tresco, adult, 11th November to 1995, photo. (R. J. Hathway *et al.*).

(North and South America) This species now joins the very select list of those Nearctic vagrants which have bred in the Western Palearctic, but the chance of a 'pure' pair remains remote. The long-staying habit continues.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 25, 0)

Shetland Hermaness, Unst, individual last recorded on 13th July 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 508), 26th March to 24th July (per D. Suddaby).

1974 Sussex, West Chichester Harbour, 10th May (*Brit. Birds* 68: 309), now considered inadequately documented.

(Southern Oceans) The returning individual present for its twenty-first year over a twenty-three-year period.

Madeira/Cape Verde/Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae/mollis* (0, 6, 2)

1991 Humberside Flamborough Head, two, 6th September (J. McLoughlin).

IRELAND

Cork Mizen Head, two, 24th August.

1993 Cork Cape Clear Island, 11th August.

(Pacific, central and southern Atlantic and southern Indian Oceans) Apart from the two at Flamborough in 1991, all the accepted British & Irish records are concentrated in one 16-day period, during 11th-26th August (12th, 13th & 14th August 1989 at Porthgwarra, Cornwall; 26th August 1990 at Cape Clear Island; 20th August 1991 at St John's Point, Co. Down; and the two Irish records listed above). A 1994 record from Gwynedd remains to be dealt with.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* (5, 86, 2)

Man, Isle of Calf of Man, 10th September (J. Bishop, Dr J. P. Thorpe); possibly same, 11th (N. V. McCanch).

1986 Tyne & Wear Tynemouth, 18th August (M. P. Carruthers, A. Hutt, K. D. Shaw).

(Atlantic south from Madeira and Caribbean, southern Pacific and Indian Oceans) This is possibly the most troublesome species of all for the Committee, hence the small number reaching these pages. Many submitted descriptions inspire little confidence that 'sluggish' Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* were not involved. Interestingly, the few photographed or specimen records from Britain are from the spring and early summer. Does this tell us anything?

In the Channel Islands, one passed Les Arquettes, Jersey, on 9th May 1994.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (4, 13, 0)

At sea Sea area Sole, 49° 05' N 07° 12' W, about 60 km SSW of Bishop Rock, Scilly, 13th August; two, 49° 06' N 07° 04' W, another two, 49° 12' N 07° 04' W, also 13th, photo. (P. Flint, J. F. Ryan *et al.*).

IRELAND

1993 At sea The record 20 km south of Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 25th August (*Brit. Birds* 87: 509) involved two individuals.

(Southern Oceans) Entirely typical records of this species, the numbers of which depend largely on the number of pelagic trips launched in search of them. One seen from land remains a major prize.

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* (0, 3, 0)

Tyne & Wear Tynemouth, 11th July, heard only (M. G. Cubitt); same or another, trapped 23rd, 25th, same as 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 509), photo. (M. G. Cubitt *et al.*).

(Northwest Pacific Ocean; winters western tropical Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean) The female recorded every summer since 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 342-348) returned once more to be tape-lured and trapped. No new individuals have been trapped at this site this decade, but one was discovered in similar circumstances at a colony of European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* 2 km off Benidorm, Spain, on the night of 12th/13th July 1994.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 174, 4)

Gwent Newport, ♂, 15th May (S. N. G. Howell, C. Jones, S. Webb).

Lothian Gorebridge, ♂, 11th May (R. M. McGregor).

Seilly Treseo, ♂, 5th-8th May (D. P. Wyatt *et al.*). St Mary's, ♀, 8th-17th May, photo., remains found about 31st (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

1984 Surrey Send, juvenile, 16th September (L. Norton).

1988 Glamorgan, Mid Kenfig Pool, ♂ 25th June to 2nd July (*Brit. Birds* 82: 510), now considered inadequately documented.

(Western Eurasia, Africa and Australia; winters Africa and southern Asia) A small influx in the first half of May, typically concentrated in the Southwest, though the one in Lothian was a good record for Scotland.

In the Channel Islands, one was at St Ouen's Pond, Jersey, from 7th to 10th May 1994.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 335, 18)

Greater London Brent Reservoir, first-summer, 19th May (S. E. Barbato *et al.*).

Gwent Newport, adult, 6th-23rd May (C. & Mrs R. Jones, R. & Mrs A. Jones *et al.*); first-summer, 6th-25th May, possibly since 10th April (J. R. Bennett, B. Burgess *et al.*).

Gwynedd Cefni Reservoir, Anglesey, adult, 2nd June (R. D. Hearn, H. Knott).

- Hertfordshire** Stevenage, juvenile, 12th August, photo. (R. Pople, A. & Mrs J. Tooby).
Kent Dungeness, first-summer, 5th June (D. Walker *et al.*).
Norfolk Sheringham, adult, 31st May (M. C. Young-Powell).
Shetland Fetlar, juvenile, 22nd October (J. & T. G. Davies, B. H. Thomason).
Suffolk Lackford, adult, 8th May (T. Humpage *et al.*).
Sussex, East Arlington, juvenile, 23rd December, photo. (J. Irons, P. Luffingham).
Sussex, West Thorney Deeps, adult, 19th April (C. B. Collins).
Tayside Kercock, probably first-summer, 3rd August (S. R. Hacker).
West Midlands Brierley Hill, adult, 6th-17th May, photo. (S. Edwards, A. Gwilt *et al.*) (plate 145, on page 507).
Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, adult, 25th May (K. J. Grearson).
1989 Suffolk Laekford, second-year, 5th May (S. Bishop).
1993 Clwyd Ddol Uehaf, near Caerwys, immature, 18th June (J. C. Jones, M. G. Neal).
1993 Cornwall Portgaverne, adult, 8th April (D. Wilson).
1993 Kent Ham Fen, second-summer, 28th May (J. N. Hollyer).

IRELAND

- Cork** Cape Clear Island, adult and two second-years, 3rd May, one second-year remaining to 4th May. Sherkin Island, second-year, 9th May.

(South Eurasia, Africa and the Americas; European population winters in Africa) A typical scatter of largely May overshoots, but the Shetland record in October is of note.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (95, 32, 7)

- Cornwall** Drift Reservoir, 11th-29th May (G. Hobin *et al.*); presumed same, Nance, near Towednaek, 6th-10th June (S. Hodder *et al.*).
Glamorgan, Mid Kenfig Pool, 28th June (H. A. Williams).
Hampshire Titchfield Haven, 7th-9th July (D. Houghton, P. M. Potts *et al.*).
Scilly Tresco, 3rd-6th, 29th May (J. & Mrs E. Turner *et al.*); presumed same, St Mary's, intermittently, 8th May to 6th June, photo., St Martin's, intermittently, 20th-30th May; St Agnes, 29th May (per W. H. Wagstaff).
Yorkshire, South Thorpe Marsh, Doncaster, 2nd-7th June, photo. (S. Chester *et al.*).

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- Waterford** Dungarvan Harbour, two adults, 2nd to at least 17th May.

(Southern Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) After a complete blank in 1993, an influx larger than any since at least 1958. The Cornish individual finished up at a site within 1 km of that in 1992.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (2, 74, 1)

- Gloucestershire** Near Gloucester, 19th March to 18th April, photo. (N. Hunt, A. Jayne *et al.*); same, Sandhurst, 29th July to at least 2nd September (per A. Jayne), presumed same as 1993 Hereford & Worcester below.
Hampshire Blashford, 14th-15th July (R. J. Casalis de Pury).
1993 Hereford & Worcester Besford, near Pershore, 25th October intermittently to 26th December, photo. (D. Stephens, S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*); same, Bredon's Hardwick, 27th December (S. J. Huggins, S. M. Whitehouse).

(Almost cosmopolitan in tropics; nearest breeders in north of France) A return to form after the double-figure influxes of 1986 and 1992.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 60, 3)

- Buckinghamshire** Milton Keynes, 22nd February to 2nd March, photo. (R. S. Hill, A. Stevenson *et al.*), presumed same as Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire.
Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton, 17th February (P. L. Varney *et al.*), presumed same as Buckinghamshire.
Norfolk Feltwell Anchor, since 22nd December 1993, to 13th February (*Brit. Birds* 87: 511), presumed same as Buckinghamshire. Cley, 21st January (T. C. Davies).

Northamptonshire Thrapston Gravel-pits, 18th February (J. E. Steward); same, Earls Barton, 20th (S. R. Mawby, J. Price-Stevens *et al.*), same as Buckinghamshire.

Shetland Brow Marsh, Spiggie, 28th April (A. J. & I. E. McCall).

Yorkshire, West Anglers Country Park, 26th May (P. Meredith, J. M. Turton).

1990 Highland Bunarkaig, Loch Lochy, 31st May to 1st June (*Brit. Birds* 86: 457), first noted 30th.

(Almost cosmopolitan, extremely local in Europe) A return to the norm after the high number in 1993. The wintering individual mentioned in last year's Report (*Brit. Birds* 87: 511) became more mobile and toured the East Midlands until its eventual disappearance in March.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (26, 91, 2)

Cumbria Blencogo, 11th April (T. Holden).

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, 17th September (T. J. Edwards, R. Prior *et al.*); same, Littlehampton, 17th (R. J. L. Kemp, E. Standling).

1993 Hampshire Yew Tree Bottom, New Forest, 25th August (P. Palmer, D. P. & I. M. Powell), probably same as Isle of Wight, 26th (*Brit. Birds* 87: 512).

(Eurasia and Southern Africa; winters Africa) A poor year for this species after a series of influxes during the last decade.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 61, 1)

Cornwall Buryas Bridge, 27th September (D. S. Flumm, D. Oates), presumed same as Scilly.

Scilly Tresco, 23rd-27th September, photo. (R. J. Hathway *et al.*) (plate 146, on page 507); same, Bryher and Samson, 23rd, St Mary's, 24th (per W. H. Wagstaff).

(Almost cosmopolitan, but nearest breeders are in Camargue, France) With the long-staying individuals in Kent now no longer with us, this species reverts to being rare and unpredictable.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (47, 79, 2)

Kent Sheppey, adult, 23rd January to 6th March (J. R. Hunter, P. Worsley *et al.*); sub-adult, 5th-13th February (J. Cantelo, D. S-H. Coates *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia; winters Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia) The present-day situation regarding the status of this species was dealt with recently (*Brit. Birds* 86: 458-459). In respect of the two records here, the Committee felt that it had no good grounds for presuming them to be escapes, but could not take the same view of two Norfolk records involving adults at Burnham Norton from 4th April to 1st May and at Welney during 9th-22nd December. It is worth noting that the *Norfolk Bird Report for 1993* states that, on 16th January that year, four adults and five juveniles arrived at Pentney from the northeast in two family groups and that there were singles there in October and December, with others also at Wroxham, Surlingham, Titchwell and Fordham. Collection birds at Pensthorpe were not known to wander, but at Earsham, near Bungay (*Brit. Birds* 86: 458), there was still a full-winged flock of 15. There was also a neck-collared individual at Cantley on at least 20th December 1993 and another in the Yare Valley on 11th January 1994. Elsewhere, an unmarked individual was seen at various Dorset localities between 19th November 1992 and 1st September 1993.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

B. b. nigricans (1, 62, 4)

Individuals showing the characters of the North American and East Siberian race *B. b. nigricans* were recorded as follows:

Essex Horsey Island, adult, 26th November (C. McClure, R. Neave, S. D. Wood *et al.*).

Suffolk King's Fleet, Felixstowe, adult, 6th November (M. C. Marsh), not same as 1993.

1993 Suffolk Felixstowe, adult, 22nd-24th January (*Brit. Birds* 87: 513), finder was M. C. Marsh.

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Down Killough, adult, 7th March to 5th April, presumed same as 11th-19th April 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 459).

Dublin Poolbeg, adult, 1st April. This is a different individual from those recorded in Dublin in previous winters (*Irish Birds* 3: 108 *et seq.*).

Louth Annagassan, adult, 6th April.

1992 Dublin Coolock, 1st January.

1993 Dublin Rogerstown, 3rd January to 21st February; and a different individual, Malahide, 21st February to 9th April.

(Arctic North America and East Siberia; winters USA and East Asia) In West Sussex and Hampshire, the individual which had visited Thorney Island and East Hayling each winter since 2nd November 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 513) failed to reappear in its usual haunts.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (15, 26, 2)

Central Region/Strathclyde Endrick Mouth, 5th December (D. C. Orr-Ewing).

Dorset See Hampshire.

Essex Burnham-on-Crouch area, intermittently, 2nd January to 5th February (S. D. Wood *et al.*), presumed same as Sheppey, Kent, 26th-28th December 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 513).

Hampshire Shepherd Spring, 13th March (A. J. Polley); same, Brownsea Island, Dorset, 14th-30th (per M. Cade); same, Needs Oar, 17th (D. Chivers, G. Horacek-Davis); all presumed to relate to West Sussex escape in 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 514).

Norfolk Wells area, first-winter, 24th October to 6th November, photo. (A. I. Bloomfield, J. R. McCallum, R. Waddington *et al.*).

(West Siberia; winters Southeast Europe) The current run of records continues, with at least one new individual under typical circumstances.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 250, 9)

Cleveland Cowpen Marsh and Greatham Tank Farm, ♂, ♀, 30th April, photo. (T. G. Francis, G. Joynt, C. Kehoe *et al.*).

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, first-winter ♂, 8th-12th March (P. Morrison *et al.*), also in Hampshire.

Fife Stenhouse Reservoir, ♂, 1st, 9th-10th January. Burntisland, ♂, 1st-2nd January, 6th, 9th February, two ♂♂, 4th January. Lochore Meadows, ♂, 17th-31st January, 5th-12th February, 3rd April (per D. E. Dickson). Two ♂♂ involved, both presumed same as 1993 below.

Hampshire Tanner's Creek, first winter ♂, 13th March (S. G. Keen), same as Dorset.

Lancashire Leighton Moss, ♂, 7th-9th, 20th December (A. Schofield, J. Searle *et al.*).

1988 Cleveland See below.

1989 Cleveland Seal Sands, Greatham Creek, Saltholme Pools, ♂, since 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 514), to 23rd January (per G. Joynt).

1992 Grampian Loch of Skene, first-winter ♂, 16th to at least 22nd November (A. Aitken, J. Vaughan *et al.*).

1992 Strathclyde Campbeltown Loch, ♂, 2nd February to 14th April, photo. (E. J. Maguire *et al.*).

1993 Fife Stenhouse Reservoir, ♂, to 13th March (*Brit. Birds* 87: 514), to 9th March only. Burntisland, two ♂♂, 16th October to 29th December; presumed one of same, Lochore Meadows, 17th to at least 23rd November (per D. E. Dickson), both presumed returning 1992-93 individuals.

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Cork Whitegate Bay and Rostellan Lake, ♂, 4th December to 1995, presumed same as 1992/93 and 1993/94 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 514; 87: 515).

Cork/Limerick Charleville Lagoons, first-winter ♂, 3rd December to at least 25th February 1995.

Donegal Lough Swilly, adult ♂, 22nd to 23rd January. **Dunfanaghy**, adult ♂, 20th March. **Fermanagh** Castlecaidwell, Lower Lough Erne, ♂, ♀, throughout January, believed to be the same as those recorded in 1991, 1992 and 1993 (*Irish Birds* 5: 85, 214).

Londonderry Lough Beg, adult ♂, 25th to 27th May (perhaps the same as one reported a few days earlier at Belfast Harbour Pools, Down).

Wicklow Blessington, adult ♂, 25th September to 1st October.

1986 **Londonderry** Lough Foyle, ♂, 5th October (*Irish Birds* 3: 616), should be deleted: this was ♀, as correctly stated in *Irish Birds* (4: 86).

1993 **Cork** Whitegate/Rostellan area, ♂, since 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 515), remained to at least 19th February, returned 16th October and remained to 1994. **Reenydonegan Lake**, ♀ or juvenile ♂, 12th October.

1993 **Wexford** Tacumshin, adult ♂, 14th March.

(North America; winters USA and Central America) It is always difficult to identify particular occurrence patterns or new individuals of this species, but 1994 clearly saw no great influx of new blood.

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

A. c. carolinensis (13, 321, -)

A drake showing the characters of the North American race *A. c. carolinensis* was recorded as follows:

1990 **Humberside** Hornsea Mere, 7th April to 5th May (T. D. Charlton *et al.*).

(North America) This race is no longer considered by the Committee.

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (1, 18, 2)

Scilly Tresco, ♂, 1st April to 1995, photo. (R. J. Hathway *et al.*) (plate 152, on page 516).

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Cork Lissagriffin, 3rd September to at least mid October.

1993 **Cork** Ballycotton, ♂, 26th to 28th January; same individual at Loughaderry from 30th January to at least 9th February.

(North America). The latest new arrival in Scilly looks set to continue the long-staying tradition.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 168, 5)

Cleveland Reclamation Pond and Haverton Hole, ♀, intermittently, 30th August to 29th September (M. J. Gee, C. Kehoe *et al.*).

Devon Roadford Reservoir, ♂, 17th-21st October (I. Kendall, S. G. Madge, P. Stone *et al.*).

Kent Stoke Lagoon, ♀, 18th-30th May, consorting with ♂ Northern Shoveler *A. clypeata* (T. E. Bowley, D. L. Davenport *et al.*).

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Wexford Lady's Island Lake, ♂, 9th November.

Wicklow Kilcoole/Newcastle, ♀, 11th to 21st September.

1987 **Down** Quoile Pondage (*Irish Birds* 3: 617) was ♂.

(North America; winters south to Brazil) A decline in fortunes from the higher totals of the 1980s, but the traditional habits of autumn occurrence and making friends with Northern Shovelers *A. clypeata* remain.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (1, 334, -)

1991 **Humberside** Hornsea Mere, ♂, 25th May (T. D. Charlton, C. R. Hine).

1992 **Highland** Loch Morlich, ♀, 29th October to 5th December (S. Blamire, T. M. Brereton, D. M. Pullan *et al.*).

1992 **Humberside** Hornsea Mere, ♂, 5th April to 2nd May (T. D. Charlton *et al.*), presumed same as 1991 above.

1993 **Cleveland/Durham** Crookfoot Reservoir, ♂, 9th-10th May (B. J. K. Caswell, G. Joynt), presumed same as Cleveland and Durham, May 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 515).

1993 **Scilly** Tresco, ♂, 23rd September (R. J. Arnfield, R. J. Hathway *et al.*).

1993 **Yorkshire**, West Pugneys Country Park, ♂, 7th September (P. Smith), presumed returning 1991 West Yorkshire individual (*Brit. Birds* 85: 516).

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1990 **Armagh** Ellis's Gut, Lough Neagh, ♂ (*Brit. Birds* 87: 516), refers to Co. Down.

1990 **Down** See 1990 Armagh, above.

1993 **Kerry** Killarney, ♂, January to March and November to March 1994.

(North America; winters to Central America) The female at Loch Morlich was discovered on the same day as the regular male reappeared (*Brit. Birds* 87: 516), but neither then nor during subsequent observations did they seem to show any particular interest in each other, despite the fact that both departed at about the same time. The Humberside individual in both 1991 and 1992 provided yet another example of short-staying apparent passage migrants in spring. There are as yet few clues as to where these birds are summering. This species is no longer considered by the Committee.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 7, 2)

Gloucestershire Lechlade, ♂, 10th November to 28th December, photo. (C. Menendez, S. N. Thomson *et al.*) (plates 150 & 151, on page 516).

Lancashire Pine Lake and Dockacres Gravel-pit, first-winter ♂, 18th-31st December, photo. (W. C. Aspin, P. J. Marsh, J. F. Wright *et al.*).

(Western North America; winters south and east to Colombia) With two further records, this species looks destined to become an annual feature in these Reports.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 74, 4)

Fife Tayport, ♂, 2nd January to 26th February; same, Lucky Scalp, River Tay, 2nd March; presumed same, Tentsmuir Point, River Tay, 16th October to 1995 (O. Campbell *et al.*), presumed returning 1993 individual (*Brit. Birds* 87: 517). Presumed same as Ythan Estuary, Grampian, below. Methil, ♀, 20th September (D. E. Dickson *et al.*).

Grampian Ythan Estuary, ♂, 26th March (C. H. & the late A. G. Clarke, C. Hill *et al.*); same, Murcar, 6th July (G. Buchanan, A. Webb, R. White); presumed same, Girdle Ness, 12th June (Dr I. M. Phillips, K. D. Shaw); also in Fife. Kingston, ♂, 2nd May (M. J. H. Cook); presumed same, Lossiemouth, 9th October to 1995 (C. A. Gervaise, R. A. Mavor, R. Proctor *et al.*).

Shetland Mousa Sound, first-winter ♂, 8th January to at least 29th April (P. M. Ellis *et al.*); presumed same, as first-summer, Sumburgh Head, 16th July to at least 21st August (M. Heubeck *et al.*). West Voe of Sumburgh, ♀, 16th to at least 24th January (M. Mellor *et al.*); presumed same, Wadbister Voe, 24th November (A. & J. Clifton). Raewick, Redayre and Tresta area, ♂, since 10th November 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 517), to 11th September (per K. Osborn).

1993 **Fife** Tayport, ♂, to 6th March (*Brit. Birds* 87: 517), 13th March (per D. E. Dickson).

1993 **Highland** Brora, ♂, to 17th February (*Brit. Birds* 87: 517), 19th March, 5th-8th May (A. Vittery).

(Circumpolar Arctic) The male regularly visiting Brora, Highland, was apparently missing this year, as was one of the regulars on the Ythan Estuary. A further Shetland record remains under consideration.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

M. n. americana (0, 5, 0)

Individuals showing the characters of the North American and East Siberian race *M. n. americana* were recorded as follows:

1992 **Highland** Burghead Bay, ♂, at least 8th December (*Brit. Birds* 87: 518), locality is in Grampian.

1993 **Grampian** Findhorn, ♂, 23rd February (R. J. Evans); presumed same, Burghead, 12th March (M. C. Dennis *et al.*), presumed same as December 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 518).

1993 **Highland** Dornoch, ♂, 21st April (*Brit. Birds* 87: 517), 6th-7th March, 4th April (I. A. MacDonald per A. Vittery).

(Northern Holarctic). Observers are reminded that excellent views and descriptions are required to substantiate claims of this race.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* (5, 2, 2)

Cleveland Coatham Marsh, first-summer ♂, 1st-7th June, photo. (D. J. Britton, I. Foster, E. M. Laverick *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Colwick, ♂, 17th-26th March, photo. (S. Boot, M. C. Dennis *et al.*) (plates 148 & 149, on page 516).

(North America) The publication of these records does not constitute any official endorsement of their status as wild birds, but merely that in both cases their identification was established beyond doubt. The last British record, however, from South Uist, Western Isles, from 14th to 18th March 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 464) and most of the Western Palearctic records from 1980 onwards suggest that the date of discovery of the Colwick individual does no harm to its credentials as a wild bird.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 193, 26)

Avon Walton-in-Gordano, 14th May (R. J. Prytherch).

Cleveland Billingham, 17th August (M. A. Blick).

Cornwall St Buryan area, 18th-21st May (G. Hobin *et al.*).

Dorset Portland, 4th May (G. Walbridge, J. Williamson). Abbotsbury, 10th May (S. A. Groves). Edmondsham, 16th June (H. G. Wood Homer).

Essex Rayleigh, 9th May (R. & Mrs S. Peppiatt). Colne Point, 10th May (N. Harvey).

Hampshire Pig Bush, New Forest, 9th May (G. Maclean, P. Pearson).

Kent Bough Beech Reservoir, 24th April (C. Bond, M. C. Buckland, J. Tilbrook *et al.*); 9th May (C. Newton, S. R. & Mrs J. R. Perry). Pegwell Bay, 12th May (D. C. Gilbert). Dover, 13th May (J. T. Smith). St Margaret's Bay, 15th May; 30th May (A. J. Greenland).

Lancashire Preston, 24th April (J. G. & P. M. Hall), presumed same as Merseyside.

Lincolnshire Boston, 4th June (P. A. & Mrs P. J. Hyde).

Merseyside Seaforth, 24th April, photo. (P. Kinsella, T. Vaughan, S. Young *et al.*) (plate 164, on page 532), also in Lancashire.

Norfolk Beeston, 29th April (D. Bryant, N. Owens, J. C. Wasse *et al.*); same, Blakeney, 29th (J. Gallagher). Cromer, 2nd May (B. J. Murphy). Attleborough, 15th May (C. & Master J. Knott).

Scilly St Mary's, 22nd April (G. M. Haig); same, Treseo, 22nd-24th (R. J. Hathway *et al.*).

Strathclyde Pinwherry, Ayrshire, 6th June (P. McEwen, A. Stevenson).

Surrey Capel, 15th May (W. Attridge, D. C. Fraser).

Tyne & Wear Tynemouth, 28th April (T. J. Tams), probably same as North Yorkshire.

Wiltshire Little Durnford, 4th June (G. D. Pictor, Miss G. M. Young). Aldbourne, 12th June (G. L. Webber).

Yorkshire, North Scarborough, 28th April, photo. (P. J. Dunn), probably same as Tyne & Wear.

1989 **Humberside** Hornsea Mere, 12th May (T. D. Charlton, J. Dale).

1991 **Dorset** Near Cranborne, 23rd May (W. Hayloff, S. S. King, G. Shepherd).

1991 **Humberside** Hornsea Mere, 11th May (T. D. Charlton, T. Isherwood, A. Shepherd).

1993 **Devon** Teignmouth, 18th August (R. Normand).

1993 **Hampshire** Wendleholme, Warsash, 28th April (R. K. Levett).

(Most of Eurasia, Africa and Australia) The best year ever, with an impressive number of spring overshoots in the South and Southeast, but sightings remain as brief and elusive as ever. Eliminating duplication is difficult with such mobile birds, but the ongoing upward trend is clear enough. Nevertheless, observers

should resist the temptation to jump to conclusions with this species, as both Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* and dark Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* need to be eliminated carefully. Many claims continue to be superficial and unconvincing.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (many, 23, 1)

Northumberland Rayburn Lake, Morpeth, first-winter, 21st March (A. D. McLevy).

(Southwest Greenland, Iceland and northern Eurasia) This bird's proximity to Scotland and the reintroduced population there raises the question as to where any arbitrary geographical dividing line should be drawn.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (3, 4, 0)

1993 Essex Holliwell Point, second-summer ♂, 13th-15th June (E. Jackson, D. & P. J. Low, J. & Mrs I. Miller, J. C. Sutherby).

1993 Leicestershire Saddington Reservoir, ♂, 15th September (D. J. S. Gamble).

1993 Shetland Exnaboe area, juvenile, 15th-16th September, photo. (D. & J. Coutts, J. N. Dymond, H. R. Harrop, M. Mellor *et al.*).

1993 Tayside Locality withheld, ♂, probably second-summer, 5th-7th May (J. Craib, R. Etheridge, Mrs W. Mattingley).

(Eastern Europe east to western China; winters from southern Europe south to southern Africa and east to Southeastern China) Undoubtedly amongst the highlights of 1993, these four accepted records place the species well and truly back on the British scene after 40 blank years and more than double the all-time total. Their lucky observers will be widely envied. This influx sits neatly in the context of larger-than-normal numbers in northern Europe in 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 4; 88: 268). Those in spring are clearly overshoots, whereas those in autumn, both miraculously on the same day, were caught up in a strong easterly flow which was responsible for the arrival of many large birds of prey, notably Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus*. The Tayside individual is perhaps of greatest interest in that it exhibited territorial behaviour and drew attention to itself by its display and call. One further report from 1993, in Humberside in September, remains under consideration. It has also been brought to our attention that the adult male reportedly shot 'in east Dorset' on 11th April 1938 (*Brit. Birds* 32: 150), and still in identifiable condition at the County Museum, Dorchester, is in fact labelled as having been obtained at Whatcombe, near Blandford Forum. On a technical note, the BOURC is currently considering the question of transferring this species from Category B to Category A.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (11, 6, 0)

1992 Greater London Hampstead Heath, ♂, 31st May (M. A. Hardwick).

1968 Cornwall St Ives, 31st May (*Brit. Birds* 62: 466), was first-summer ♂, correct date 30th.

The following records are now considered to have been inadequately documented:

1969 Cornwall Porthgwarra, 11th October (*Brit. Birds* 63: 274).

1971 Scilly St Agnes, 28th October (*Brit. Birds* 65: 331).

1973 Glamorgan, West Vale of Neath, 7th November (*Brit. Birds* 67: 319).

1973 Staffordshire Cannock Chase Reservoir, now Chasewater, 4th November (*Brit. Birds* 67: 319).

1973 Sussex, West Steyning, 4th November (*Brit. Birds* 67: 319).

1983 Humberside Atwick, 14th June (*Brit. Birds* 79: 541).

(Iberia, Northwest Africa and southern Europe eastwards into Asia; winters

Africa south of the Sahara) Following the review of post-1958 records, the six listed above have been considered inadequately documented. The review therefore considerably alters the status of this species in Britain and further emphasises its occurrence here largely as a spring overshoot rather than an autumn vagrant. Of the 17 currently acceptable records, only three now fall in October/November, with a clear majority falling in May/June, a pattern more consistent with what one might expect from a species with such a southerly distribution. This places the 1992 record neatly into the established pattern and it is noteworthy that its occurrence coincided with the second of two large waves of Red-footed Falcons *F. vespertinus* in that month.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 522, 19)

Cleveland Hartlepool Headland, ♀, 24th May (C. Kehoe).

Cornwall St Columb Major, first-summer ♂, 6th-12th June (S. M. Christophers, A. Grundon *et al.*).

Humberside Spurn, ♀, 12th-13th May (F. Baudet, J. Cudworth *et al.*).

Kent Stodmarsh, first-summer ♀, 9th-11th May (R. Boulden, D. C. Gilbert).

Lancashire Leighton Moss, ♀, 27th-28th May, photo. (P. J. Marsh *et al.*) (plate 165, on page 532).

Lincolnshire Kirkby Moor, ♀, 14th-19th May, photo. (G. P. Catley, A. Parker *et al.*). Donna Nook, ♀, 22nd-25th May (A. H. J. Harrop, J. Wright *et al.*) (fig. 1, on page 510); same, North Coates, 26th (per G. P. Catley).

Suffolk Great Livermere, ♀, 25th-29th May, photo. (T. Humpage, T. Stopher *et al.*).

Minsmere, ♀, 29th May to 3rd June (S. Dove, A. Lapworth, A. Smith *et al.*).

Sussex, East Icklesham, ♀, 30th May to 12th June (I. Hunter).

Yorkshire, North Scarborough, first-summer ♀, 6th May (R. H. Appleby).

Yorkshire, South Royd Moor Reservoir, ♀, 28th May (J. E. Dale, N. E. Parker, M. Wells *et al.*).

1990 Strathclyde Southend, Kintyre, ♀, 19th August (E. J. Maguire).

1992 Hampshire King's Somborne, first-summer ♂, 21st-22nd June (J. G. Grafton, T. J. Norris).

1992 Highland Loch Flemington, ♂, 15th-16th May (M. Harvey, A. F. McNee, G. Prest).

1992 Norfolk Winterton, first-summer ♂, ♀, first-summer ♀, 14th May (G. M. Cresswell).

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Cork Cape Clear Island, second-year ♂, 4th May.

Londonderry Lough Beg, ♂, 22nd to 29th May.

Tipperary Rockwell, ♀, 15th May.

Waterford Helvick Head, ♀, 5th May.

Wexford Near Kilmore Quay, ♀, 3rd to at least 20th May.

Wicklow Five-mile-point/Kilcoole, ♀, 15th to 16th May. Blessington, ♀, 19th May.

At sea Fastnet Rock area, ♀, came aboard fishing boat 32 km off Co. Cork, 3rd May, cared for and released at Youghal on 17th May.

(East Europe to Central Siberia; winters Africa) An average showing, and no surprises in either dates or locations. Of particular interest, however, is the great preponderance of females, for which no obvious reason presents itself. Previous influxes, including the invasion of 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 223-231), have contained no such imbalance between the sexes. The late acceptances for 1992 raise that year's total to an astonishing 125. The field identification of this species has recently been reviewed by Brian Small (*Brit. Birds* 88: 181-189).

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 106, 5)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first- or second-year ♀, white-phase, 5th March to 2nd May (J. Cutt, P. J. Donnelly, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*); presumed same, Stronsay, 12th-18th April (J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway).



Plate 145. Adult Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, West Midlands, May 1994 (Keith Stone)



Plate 146. Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, Tresco, Scilly, September 1994 (Reston Kilgour)

Plate 147. Below, hybrid Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* × Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, Cornwall, August 1994 (P. Hopkins)



Shetland Easter Quarff, ♀, white-phase, 18th February (H. R. Harrop, M. Mellor). Mid Yell, first-winter ♂, white-phase, 14th February (P. V. Harvey, D. Suddaby); presumed same, Haroldswick, Unst, 20th (M. J. Macleod, M. G. Pennington), Westings, Unst, 28th (per M. G. Pennington), Sandwick, 14th April (M. Heubeck). Nesbister, 16th March (C. J. Fraser), presumed same as one or other of above.

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, white-phase, 14th April (J. Vaughan).

IRELAND

Mayo Clare Island, adult ♀, found moribund, mid May.

1992 Donegal Bunbeg, 14th March.

(Circumpolar Arctic) Despite some long stays in the Northern Isles, appearances were often brief and widely separated in time and location, thus hindering attempts to determine the true number of individuals involved. Several records from earlier years remain under consideration. Further to the list of records of white-phase individuals in the 1993 Report (*Brit. Birds* 87: 520), it is now known that the one at Glen Tanar, Grampian, on 18th April 1973 (*Brit. Birds* 67: 318) was also white-phase.

Little Crake *Porzana parva* (68, 30, 1)

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, juvenile moulting to first-winter ♂, 17th August, photo. (J. Hall, D. N. Smith *et al.*).

(Central and East Europe and West Asia) This species remains unpredictable in its occurrences, this being the first since 1987.

Common Crane *Grus grus* (many, 1242, –)

1986 Cheshire Burton Point, at least 25th August (*Brit. Birds* 87: 521), entered Clwyd daily, 18th–28th (E. J. Abraham).

1986 Clwyd See above.

(Scandinavia east to Central Siberia; winters North Africa and Middle East east to Southeast Asia) This species is no longer considered by the Committee.

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* (92, 15, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, 5th–6th November (Mrs E. A. Riddiford, Dr R. Riddington, N. C. Ward *et al.*).

(Breeds France, Iberia and Northwest Africa eastwards through southern Europe to Kazakhstan. The northern French population probably winters south to Iberia) Always a major prize, this ranks high on the list of highlights of autumn 1994 and fits well into the established late-autumn/early-winter pattern.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 196, 1)

Kent Dungeness, 11th July (D. Okines).

Norfolk Titchwell, since 17th September 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 521), to 1995, photo. (B. J. Robson *et al.*).

IRELAND

1993 Cork Dunworly Bay, adult, 12th April.

1993 Wexford Lady's Island Lake, adult ♀, 10th to 24th April.

(Southern Eurasia, Africa, the Americas and Australia) With only one new bird, this was the worst showing since 1982. The Norfolk individual looks set to become a permanent resident.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (31, 48, 2)

Gloucestershire See Hereford & Worcester.

Hereford & Worcester Bredon's Hardwick, 4th May (R. W. Price, S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*), flew into Gloucestershire (per A. Jayne); presumed same, near Hereford, 20th May (S. Coney, C. Wells).

Norfolk Titchwell, 1st-3rd, 14th July, photo. (B. J. Robson, C. Samuels *et al.*) (plate 166, on page 532); presumed same, Cley, intermittently, 4th-20th (per G. E. Dunmore).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) A swift response to the request in the Report for 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 476), but this species remains rare and shows no signs of regaining its levels of occurrence of the 1970s. The one in Norfolk was the first in that county this century.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* (0, 5, 0)

1993 **Suffolk** Havergate, 4th, 19th September (C. A., M. L. & W. R. Cornish, S. Denny).

1993 **Sussex**, East Pevensey Levels, 29th-30th August (D. & J. F. Cooper, R. D. M. Edgar, R. J. Fairbank *et al.*).

(South and East Asia; winters India east to Northern Australia) The Committee could find no direct evidence to link either of these records with that of the 1993 Norfolk individual, which was last seen on 17th August (*Brit. Birds* 87: 522). It is clearly possible for only one erratically wandering bird to have been involved, but it seems equally reasonable to treat those in East Anglia as relating to the same bird and that in Sussex as a separate occurrence.

Collared/Oriental/Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola pratincola/maldivarum/nordmanni* (36, 99, 2)

1993 **Sussex**, West Pagham Harbour, 21st September (T. J. Edwards).

The totals include those specifically identified.

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus* (9, 40, 0)

1993 **Shetland** Hillwell and Brake area, 17th-18th March (*Brit. Birds* 87: 522), full dates 13th-20th.

(North America) The one on Anglesey in December 1993 referred to in last year's Report (*Brit. Birds* 87: 522) lingered into 1994 (plate 161, on page 525), but still remains to be properly documented.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (0, 28, 2)

Cornwall Hayle, adult, 26th August (C. Batty, A. S. Disley) (fig. 4, on page 513).

Humberside South Ferriby and Read's Island area, adult, 10th-11th July (G. P. Catley, S. Routledge).

1990 **Clwyd** Oakenholt Marsh, adult, 2nd-4th August, photo. (I. Higginson *et al.*).

1990 **Lancashire** Pilling, adult, 22nd July to at least 6th August (*Brit. Birds* 85: 525), 24th (P. J. Marsh, T. Wilmer *et al.*).

IRELAND

1993 **Dublin** Swords Estuary, adult, 3rd to 5th August.

1993 **Wexford** The Cull, adult, 21st to 24th July; same individual at Tacumshin, 24th July to 2nd August.

(North and Northeast Asia and Alaska; winters southern Asia, Australia and western North America) It is quite possible that the one in Humberside was the same individual as that in the same area on similar dates in 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 524), whilst the Clwyd occurrence echoes that of a specifically indeterminate bird at the same locality on 23rd July 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 477). The first British records also involved presumed repeat performances at Aberlady, Lothian, on 10th-16th July 1976 and 9th July 1977. The pattern of summer and early-autumn adults is now well established, but are we missing juveniles later in the autumn?

Habits

Regularly watched feeding in open grass & vegetation well away from the shoreline. Sometimes worked. Feeding action was usually quite brisk. When alarmed (sparrows overhead) it would often crouch or stand upright.



white wing bar although very narrow, still very sharp and clear. Buffy bases to primaries forming patch. Long wings quite reticulate & dark. Flight among Dunlin

tail buff white as in adult. looking down-curved at rest.

Scapulars dark brown with off-white fringes, forming a speckled & a very weakly apparent & narrow buffy white streak.

tert also a broad dark brown with broad white fringes & a narrow streak of white below.

long primary, inner webbed tail.

bill & iris with slight curve (straighter than W.R. Sandpiper)

short-legged (shorter than)

neat pectoral band, finely streaked against buffy wash. Also 3 or 4 rows of fine flecks on white breast-side. belly & flanks white.

Regularly heard calling a low trilling 'preet' similar to Curlew Sandpiper but lower in pitch.

Juv Dunlin

Juv Curlew Sandpiper

Juv Dunlin

Juv Baird's Sandpiper

(size between little stint and Dunlin)

Fig. 3. Juvenile Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Leicestershire, September 1994 (John Wright)

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (6, 173, 8)
Avon Chew Valley Lake, adult, 23rd-27th October (R. M. Andrews, S. Preddy *et al.*).
Devon Northam Burrows, juvenile, 19th-27th October (I. Kendall *et al.*).
Hampshire Lower Pennington, juvenile, 20th November (M. C. & P. Combridge).
Lincolnshire Holbeach Marsh, adult, 24th July (A. H. J. Harrop, J. Wright).
Strathclyde Cumnock, Ayrshire, 12th-17th March (M. Williamson *et al.*).
Tyne & Wear Whitburn, adult, 18th-21st September, photo. (D. M. Foster *et al.*); same, St Mary's Island, 24th-25th (C. Knox, J. G. Steele *et al.*). St Mary's Island, juvenile, 25th

September to 11th October, photo. (I. Fisher, J. R. Todd *et al.*) (plate 158, on page 524); same, Whitburn, intermittently, 8th October to 30th November (D. M. Foster *et al.*).

1993 **Humberside** South Ferriby, adult, 24th July (*Brit. Birds* 87: 524); presumed same, Blacktoft Sands, 30th (Mr & Mrs A. D. Alexander, J. Davison, T. K. Sykes).

IRELAND

Cork Clonakilty/Inchydoney, juvenile, 22nd October.

1993 **Cork** Kinsale Marsh, juvenile, 10th to 14th October.

1993 **Kerry** Rough Point, Castlegregory, adult, 17th to 19th July.

1993 **Londonderry** Bann Estuary, first-summer or adult, 17th to 20th August.

(Arctic North America and extreme Northeast Asia; winters South America)

A fairly average scatter, though spring records are still unusual, and the two overlapping individuals in Tyne & Wear would be noteworthy anywhere but are especially so on the East Coast. The Lincolnshire bird is a further reminder that early-autumn adult 'Lesser Golden Plovers' are not automatically Pacifics. Some of the identification pitfalls of this species were highlighted recently by Graham P. Catley (*Brit. Birds* 88: 195, 209-210).

Pacific/American Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva/dominica* (6, 210, 12)

IRELAND

Cork Ballycotton, 29th to 30th August; 14th to 15th October.

The totals include those specifically identified.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (2, 69, 2)

Devon Lundy, juvenile, 9th-10th October (G. K. Gordon *et al.*).

Hampshire Keyhaven Marsh, adult, 17th-18th July (D. N. Smith, P. A. Stancliffe *et al.*).

(North America; winters Central and South America) An average showing. Details of one in adult summer plumage in Orkney in June 1993 have recently been published as an exemplary submission to the Committee (*Brit. Birds* 88: 196-200).

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* (0, 2, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, juvenile, recently dead, 31st August, photo., now at National Museum of Scotland (Dr R. Riddington, J. A. Stout *et al.*).

(Siberia; winters Southeast Asia and Australia) The first juvenile for Britain and Ireland (and indeed for Europe) was long expected, but perhaps not at this location or under these circumstances. The prize for discovering a live juvenile remains to be claimed.

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* (0, 2, 0)

1970 **Cornwall** Marazion, 7th-8th June, photo. (J. H. Johns, P. D. Round *et al.*); previously accepted as Least Sandpiper *C. minutilla* (*Brit. Birds* 64: 351).

(Breeds Siberia; winters India, Southeast Asia and Australia) This record has been under review for a considerable period, but the fact that it was well photographed and that birdwatchers (including members of the Committee) are now far more familiar with the species ensured its eventual unanimous acceptance as the first for Britain and Ireland, and indeed Europe. One of the photographs helpfully showed a raised foot and was therefore a vital clue in the assessment process. The only other accepted British record, a juvenile at Saltholme Pool, Cleveland, from 28th August to 1st September 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 546; 85: 429-436), now becomes the second.

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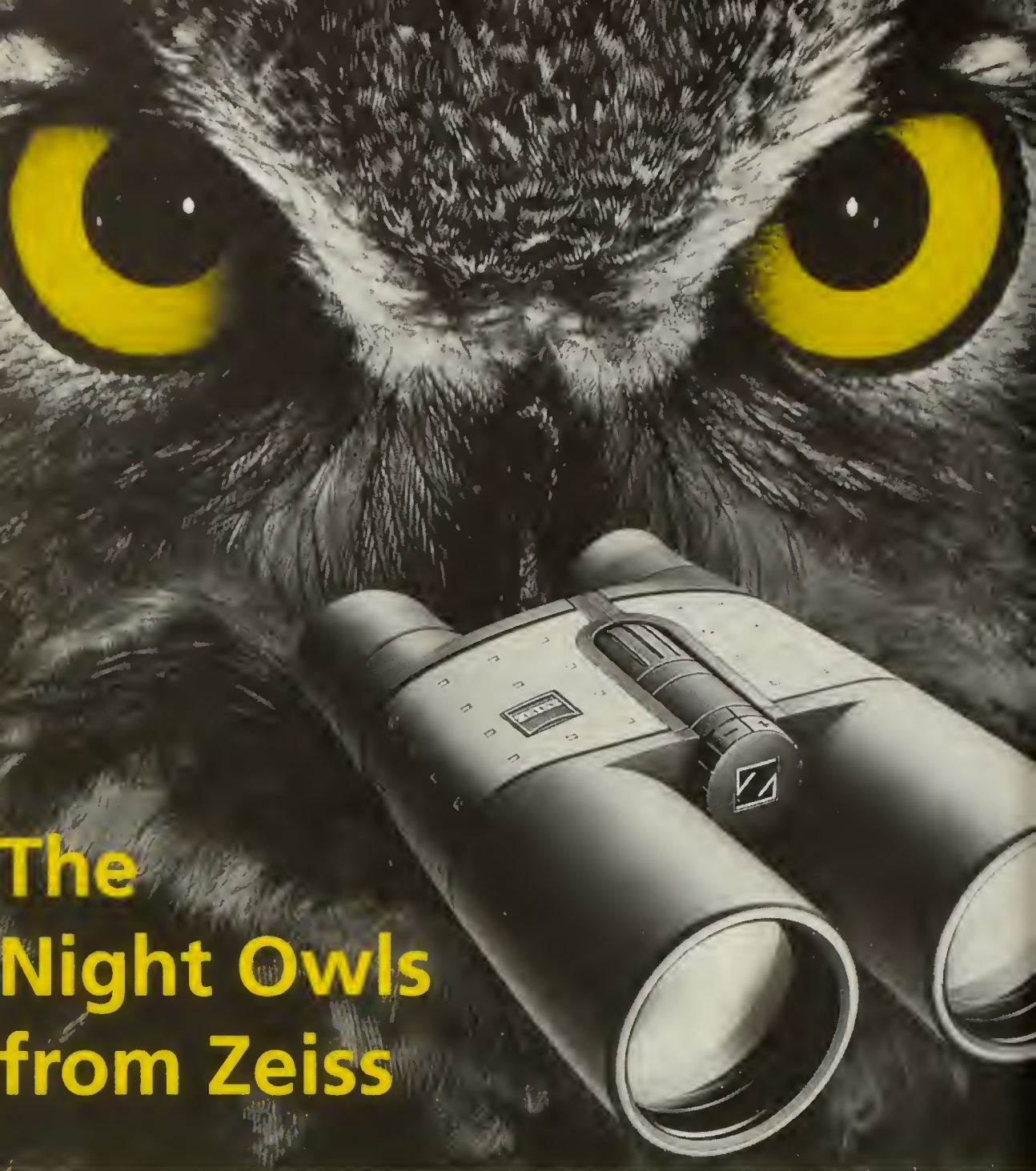
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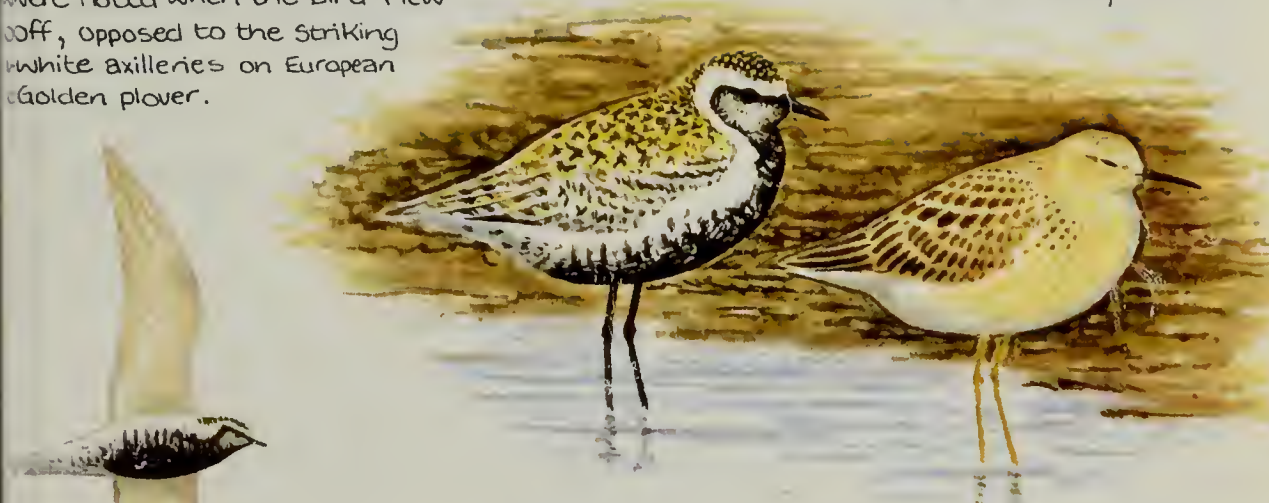
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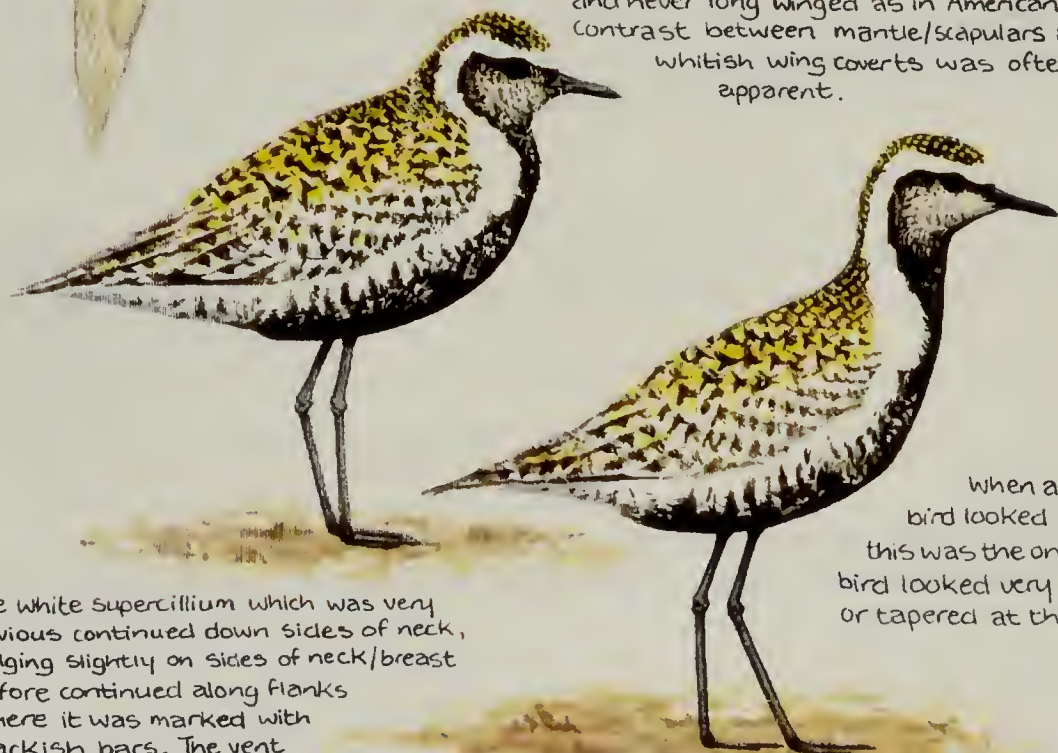
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Direct size comparison alongside a Juv ♀ Ruff showed just how small the bird really was.

Brownish/grey underwings/axillaries were noted when the bird flew off, opposed to the striking white axillaries on European Golden plover.



When hunched the bird appeared quite compact and never long winged as in American G. P. Contrast between mantle/scapulars and the whitish wing coverts was often very apparent.



When alert the bird looked thin/lanky, this was the only time the bird looked very attenuated or tapered at the rear.

The white supercilium which was very obvious continued down sides of neck, bulging slightly on sides of neck/breast before continued along flanks where it was marked with blackish bars. The vent and undertail were white with blackish marks. The most striking features were the long bill and legs, the former being the first feature that aroused my suspicion that it was a Lesser Golden Plover when I first picked up the bird bathing in water up to its belly, before it walked out to reveal its long legs especially the tibia.

Antony S. Disley '94

Fig. 4. Adult Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Cornwall, 26th August 1994 (Antony S. Disley)

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 332, 9)

Cheshire Frodsham, adult, 11th August (E. J. Abraham, W. S. Morton, D. Roberts).

Kent Cliffe, adult, 12th-14th August, photo. (R. C. Peters *et al.*).

Leicestershire Rutland Water, adult, 21st-24th July, photo. (T. P. Appleton, A. H. J. Harrop, A. Lees *et al.*) (fig. 2, on page 510).

Strathclyde Barassie, adult, 27th-29th August (R. H. Hogg *et al.*). Turnberry Point, adult, 17th September (R. H. Hogg).

IRELAND

Cork Lissagriffin, 7th September. Inchydoney, adult, 8th September. Rosscarbery, juvenile, 14th October.

Wicklow Kilcoole/Newcastle, adult, 10th to 17th September.

1993 Cork Ballycotton, adult, 20th to 24th July. Kinsale Marsh, juvenile, 1st to 10th October.

1993 Wicklow Kilcoole, adult, 13th to 14th August.

(Northern North America; winters southern South America) An unimpressive showing of the now-expected early-autumn adults, though inland records are rare.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (5, 163, 6)

Cumbria South Walney, juvenile, 14th-15th September (W. Makin, P. Zaltowski *et al.*).

Leicestershire Eye Brook Reservoir, juvenile, 17th-26th September, photo. (A. H. J. Harrop, L. Proctor, J. Wright *et al.*) (fig. 3, on page 511).

Northamptonshire Stanwick Gravel-pits, adult, 31st July to 1st August, photo. (C. J. Coe, F. C. Smith *et al.*).

Western Isles St Kilda, age uncertain, 16th-20th August (T. J. Dix, J. Vaughan, J. A. Wolstencroft).

1990 Suffolk Easton Bavents, juvenile, 27th October to at least 1st November (*Brit. Birds* 86: 480), 27th October only.

1993 Norfolk Titchwell, adult, 25th August (*Brit. Birds* 87: 526), 27th (C. & D. K. Lamsdell).

1993 Orkney North Ronaldsay, juvenile, 4th-11th October (M. Gray *et al.*).

IRELAND

Cork Inchydoney, juvenile, 6th September.

Kerry Blackrock Strand, juvenile, 3rd to 5th September.

(North America and Northeastern Siberia; winters South America) An average number, though, as with the previous species, note the inland occurrences.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (5, 16, 1)

1973 Cheshire See below.

1973 Clwyd Shotton, Flintshire, 14th-24th October (*Brit. Birds* 67: 323), was on Shotwick Fields, flew across Cheshire boundary briefly on 16th (E. J. Abraham).

IRELAND

Wexford Tacumshin, adult, 7th to 20th August (plate 159, on page 524).

(Northeast Siberia; winters New Guinea and Australasia) None in Britain in 1994 but the first Irish record.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 150, 7)

Cleveland Saltholme Marsh, 5th-7th May, photo. (D. Clayton, G. Joynt, J. Grieveson *et al.*).

Greatham Creek and Greenabella Marsh, 22nd-26th July (N. A. Preston, A. J. Wheeldon *et al.*).

Seal Sands, juvenile, 27th September to 3rd October (T. G. Francis, R. M. Ward *et al.*).

Hampshire Pennington Marsh, 2nd-7th May (J. M. Clark, J. A. Eyre, D. Gumn *et al.*).

Kent Shellness, 3rd May, photo. (R. E. Jackson). Elmley, 19th-22nd July (J. A. Rowlands *et al.*).

Strathclyde Balcpethrish Bay, Tiree, 13th May (P. A. Fraser, C. J. Murphy).

1992 Cleveland Greatham Creek and Seal Sands, 3rd-6th June (*Brit. Birds* 86: 480), delete P. A. A. Baxter. Additional record: Greenabella Marsh, 23rd June (P. A. A. Baxter *et al.*).

IRELAND

1993 Kerry Rough Point, Castlegregory, adult, 17th to 18th July.

(North Eurasia; winters southern Asia and Australia) A typical set of May and July records, though autumn juveniles remain hard to come by and are therefore highly prized. With the late acceptances detailed here, Cleveland is making a bid to rival Norfolk as the premier county for this species. Norfolk had its first blank year since 1988.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (180, 73, 4)

Norfolk Sheringham, 17th September (D. P. Appleton, K. B. Shepherd *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 1st October (M. Gray). Honeysgeo, South Ronaldsay, 20th October (T. Dean).

Shetland Geosetter, 29th September (N. Alford, N. R. Stocks).

(Northeast Europe and Northwest Asia; winters Africa). Four records is higher than the average, and there were five in 1993.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 171, 3)

Cornwall Crowdy Reservoir and Davidstow Airfield, age uncertain, 17th-23rd September, photo. (A. & P. Blonden, G. P. Sutton *et al.*).

Norfolk Pentney, 28th April (J. D. Geeson *et al.*).

Tayside Montrose Basin, adult, 10th-29th July (G. M. Addison, M. S. Scott *et al.*); presumed same, as returning individual, 17th-24th September (M. Groves, D. Whitton *et al.*).

1968 Norfolk Snettisham, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 7th-30th September (D. J. Holman *et al.*), previously accepted as unspecified dowitcher (*Brit. Birds* 62: 468).

IRELAND

1987 Kerry Akeragh Lough, 13th September to 26th October.

1993 Clare Lough O'Donnell, 30th October.

1993 Cork Ballycotton, juvenile, 24th September, joined by another juvenile on 25th September.

(North America and Northeast Siberia; winters USA and Central America) A poor year. Spring ones are still good finds.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 68, 5)

Kent High Halstow area, 8th-16th May, 12th, 25th June, 3rd July (P. G. Akers, P. Larkin); presumed same, Cliffe, 7th July to 22nd August, photo. (D. Mercer *et al.*, per D. W. Taylor), possibly same as Surrey.

Northamptonshire Earls Barton Gravel-pits, 19th-23rd April, photo. (G. P. Douglas, S. R. Mawby *et al.*).

Surrey Old Woking, 4th-7th May (J. Gates *et al.*), possibly same as Kent.

IRELAND

Wexford North Slob, two, 17th August, one remaining to 21st August.

(Southeast Europe, Asia; winters Africa, South Asia and Australia) The records here are well in line with the average of recent years, apart from small influxes in 1984 and 1990.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (12, 17, 1)

Cumbria Carr Beds, Rockcliffe, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 15th-28th October, 12th-13th November, photo. (A. Cremin *et al.*) (plate 163, on page 525).

1992 Cambridgeshire Welches Dam, 24th May (R. M. Patient, B. J. Small *et al.*).

(North America; winters USA south to southern South America) These, including the late acceptance, are the first in Britain since the record three in 1985. The Cumbria individual may well have been the same as one present at Zeebrugge, Belgium, from 27th November to 2nd December (*Brit. Birds* 88: 272). This remains a very rare bird, given to prolonged absences.



Plates 148 & 149. Male Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*, Nottinghamshire, March 1994 (Ian Fisher)



Plates 150 & 151. Male Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, Gloucestershire, 14th December 1994 (J. F. Cooper)

Plate 152. Below, male American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*, Scilly, October 1994 (Rob Wilson)



Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 193, 2)

Dorset Coward's Marsh, Christchurch, first-winter, 30th November to 3rd December; same, Stanpit Marsh, 3rd-6th, and Wickfield area to mid month, photo. (A. Hayden *et al.*) (plate 162, on page 525).

Norfolk Cley, 13th-15th May, photo. (T. C. Davies *et al.*).

(North America; winters southern USA, Central and South America) A very poor showing indeed, and not a single one in autumn.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 99, 4)

Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton, first-winter, since 7th October 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 529), to 1st May (per R. Allison).

Kent Near Ashford, adult, 14th-15th June, photo. (Dr C. Powell *et al.*).

Norfolk Welney, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 18th September to 27th January 1995 (J. B. Kemp *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Holme Pierrepont, first-winter, 17th December to 5th January 1995, trapped 28th December, photo. (B. & J. Ellis, A. W. Mason, D. C. Wood *et al.*) (plates 121 & 122).

1992 Yorkshire, West (*Brit. Birds* 87: 529); two previously overlooked records probably related to this same individual: Wath Ings, South Yorkshire, 24th-25th May 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 498), and Ingbirchworth Reservoir, South Yorkshire, adult, 13th-28th September 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 527) (per J. M. Turton).

IRELAND

Kerry Dunquin, 22nd June.

(North America; winters USA south to Uruguay) This species, along with Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, remains strangely rare (particularly in autumn) and, for the time being at least, is occurring largely as a winterer.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes* (0, 1, 1)

Grampian Burghead, juvenile, 27th November to 27th December, photo. (P. T. Hirst, J. M. Stenning *et al.*) (plate 160, on page 524).

(Breeds Northeast Siberia; winters Southeast Asia to Australasia) The second for Britain and the Western Palearctic, following the one at the Dyfi Estuary, Dyfed/Gwynedd, from 13th October to 17th November 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 540; 88: 255-262). Not a wholly surprising re-occurrence given the length of the species' migration and its previous history of vagrancy to both the Western Palearctic and the Nearctic. The nearest part of its breeding range lies west of the Yenisey, and is therefore closer than that of both Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* and Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis*.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 251, 3)

Devon Lower Tamar Lake, first-winter, 4th-6th September, photo. (D. Churchill, J. Hawkey *et al.*).

Norfolk Locality in Broadland, age uncertain, 16th-20th September (P. J. Heath, B. W. Jarvis *et al.*).

Somerset Steart, first-winter, 10th-15th September, photo. (B. Jones, N. Milbourne, R. Musgrave *et al.*).

(North America; winters South America) After 1993's complete blank, a small September scattering, but still well below average by the standards of the 1970s and 1980s.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 61, 2)

Tayside Kinnaber, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 16th October (R. D. Goater).

IRELAND

Armagh Reedy Flats, Lough Neagh, second-winter, 25th August.

(North America; winters USA to South America) No documentation has yet been received for claims in Devon and Merseyside.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 28, 2)

Cornwall Hayle, adult, 21st October (M. C., P. & Mrs S. M. Combridge *et al.*).

Devon Topsham, adult, 25th June (P. & Mrs C. Leigh *et al.*).

(North America; winters South America) With none in Britain before 1970, this species has missed only two years since 1979. Records are always well scattered, both in location and in time of year.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 69, 3)

Cornwall Marazion area, adult, 3rd-5th May (D. J. D. Hickman *et al.*).

Essex Hadleigh Marsh, adult, 27th August (P. D. Green, A. R. Perkins, C. Todd).

Staffordshire Blithfield Reservoir, adult, 4th-6th October (E. S. Clare *et al.*).

1961 Sussex, East Portobello, Brighton, immature, 20th June (*Brit. Birds* 55: 574), now considered inadequately documented.

(North America; winters USA to Mexico) A typical scatter, in both number and location, but well short of the record numbers in 1990.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*

L. g. kumlieni/thayeri (0, 20, 11)

Individuals showing the characters of one or other of the western races *L. g. kumlieni* or *L. g. thayeri* were noted as follows:

Grampian Banff, adult, 27th March (D. P. Appleton), probably also present 4th, 29th January, 3rd-9th April, presumed same as 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 531).

Shetland Virkie, adult, 3rd February (D. Coutts, I. Sandison). Lerwick, adult, 8th, 14th February (D. Coutts, C. Donald, I. Sandison); same, Scalloway, 11th, photo. (P. Selater *et al.*).

Lerwick, adult, 9th-10th February (P. M. Ellis *et al.*); first-winter, 10th February to 10th March, photo. (P. Selater *et al.*); first-winter, 7th-29th March, photo. (D. Suddaby *et al.*); second-winter, 25th January, 6th-10th February (L. Dalziel, D. Suddaby *et al.*). Bigton, remains of adult, 6th February, photo., now at National Museum of Scotland (P. M. Ellis, M. Heubeck *et al.*).

Western Isles St Kilda, adults, 25th January to 6th February, two, 28th to 2nd (T. J. Dix, K. Douglas).

1979 Cornwall Penzance, adult, 3rd-15th March, photo. (W. R. Hirst, L. P. Williams).

1992 Lincolnshire North Hyckham, adult, 18th December (K. E. Durose).

1993 Highland Inverness, adult, 27th February (*Brit. Birds* 87: 531), first-named observer was S. G. Addinall.

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Cork Adrigole, adult, 25th March.

Kerry Blennerville, adult, 8th to 27th March.

1992 Cork The Lough, adult, 9th to 11th January.

1993 Cork The Lough, adult, 24th December to February 1994, probably the same individual in the three successive winters (see 1992 Cork above and *Brit. Birds* 86: 489).

1993 Dublin Skerries, third-winter, 12th September to 26th March 1994.

(Canada; winters North America) A remarkable surge of records which, particularly in the case of non-adults, may have something to do with observers scrutinising Iceland Gulls more closely. Nevertheless, an influx is clearly indicated here. Identification of these races can be fraught, to say the least, and the Committee has had considerable difficulty in drawing a line between 'pure' *glaucoideus* types and those showing traces, however subtle, of plumage features suggesting an origin from within the *kumlieni/thayeri* part of the cline. For this reason, a number of other records since 1990 remain under consideration. Assessment of some of the above was helped greatly by photographic evidence. The recent paper by Weir *et al.* (*Brit. Birds* 88: 15-25) reminds us that periodic invasions of Iceland Gulls to the northwestern Palearctic may occasionally contain a high proportion of pale-winged *kumlieni*.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 61, 5)

Cleveland Hartlepool, first-winter, 11th April (M. J. Gee, C. Kehoe *et al.*).

Cumbria Workington, first-summer, 26th-30th June, photo. (A. F. Gould *et al.*).

Lancashire Rossall Point and Fleetwood Marina, adult, 12th-17th March, photo. (A. Heath, R. Scholes, M. A. Stephens *et al.*), also in Merseyside.

Merseyside Seaforth, adult, 23rd March, photo. (A. Pryce, G. Thomas, S. White *et al.*), presumed same as Lancashire.

Tyne & Wear Sunderland, adult, 26th February to 7th March, photo. (A. & J. Brooks *et al.*) (plates 153 & 154).

Western Isles Drimsdale, South Uist, second-summer, 12th-14th May, photo. (T. J. Dix, S. Robson *et al.*) (plate 156, on page 521).

1993 Highland Inverness, first-winter, 30th January to at least 25th March (D. McGinn, A. F. McNee, G. Prest).

(Northeast Siberia and Canada) An above-average showing, with some typical late-winter/spring dates. The one in Cumbria echoes the first-summer individual which lingered in Dorset (then Hampshire) from 16th June to 20th August 1974 (*Brit. Birds* 68: 320). Although the North Sea continues to produce a high percentage of records, it is clearly also worth looking for this delightful gull in the West.



Plates 153 & 154. Adult Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, Tyne & Wear, 5th March 1994 (F. Golding)

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (76, 39, 0)

1993 Shetland Whalsay, first-winter, 13th December, was presumed same as Collafirth and Lerwick (*Brit. Birds* 87: 532).

(Arctic) The first blank year since 1987.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (52, 195, 2)

Hampshire Milford-on-Sea, 12th May (P. Combridge).

Scilly Gugh, 3rd May (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

1993 Dorset Stanpit Marsh, 5th October (*Brit. Birds* 87: 532), also 6th (L. Chapple).

1993 Norfolk Burnham Norton, 6th August (V. Eve, M. E. S. Rooney).

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colony is in Denmark; European population winters Africa) Typical brief appearances from this 'hard to get to grips with' rarity. The Committee would still be interested in comments on the South Coast records in the 1960s (*Brit. Birds* 88: 379-380).

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 202, 2)

Cheshire Neumann's Flash and Marbury, 12th June (P. M. Hill, P. E. Kenyon, M. Miles); same, Fiddler's Ferry, 12th (K. G. Massey, J. Williams).

Dyfed Skomer, 28th May (P. Oakes, M. S. Wallen).

1993 Humberside Southfield Reservoirs, Goole, 13th May (C. Featherstone, H. Grewar *et al.*), presumed same as Warwickshire, 10th, Derbyshire, 11th, Nottinghamshire, 12th (*Brit. Birds* 87: 532).

(Almost cosmopolitan except South America, everywhere local; European populations winter Africa) Touring individuals, particularly inland, are becoming a regular feature. The individual in Cheshire repeats occurrences there in 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 490) and 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 467). Such repeat visits echo similar events in east Norfolk in 1991 and 1993 and raise the question of how many (or few) may be involved.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* (0, 4, 0)

Cleveland Hartlepool Headland, 12th May (T. G. Francis, M. J. Gee, C. Kehoe). Seaton Snook, 18th May (R. M. Ward); 26th May (G. Joynt). Teesmouth, 21st May (A. J. Wheeldon *et al.*). North Gare, 28th May (M. J. Gee, C. Kehoe *et al.*). All presumed same as Farne Islands, Northumberland.

Northumberland Farne Islands, ♀, intermittently, 29th April to 24th August, presumed returning 1993 individual (*Brit. Birds* 87: 533), again paired with Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis*, one egg hatched, no young reared (K. Gillon *et al.*, per B. N. Rossiter) (plate 157); presumed same, Hauxley, 4th June (A. D. McLevy *et al.*), Cresswell Pond, 3rd July (P. W. Davidson, M. S. Hodgson, K. Robson *et al.*).

1993 Humberside Beacon Ponds, Easington, 15th-20th June (A. L. Dawson, C. Dennison *et al.*), presumed same as Northumberland (*Brit. Birds* 87: 533).

(North and East Africa, east to Australia; winter quarters uncertain) An orange-billed tern at Ross Back Sands, Northumberland, on 12th June was almost certainly this same individual. 'Elsie', as she is nicknamed, hatched an egg on 10th July, but the chick died on 15th, on which date another chick strongly reminiscent of the 1989 and 1992 hybrid offspring was located. It later became clear that one of this bird's parents was a 'Sandwich Tern' with more yellow on its bill than normal. The chick fledged on 28th July and moved away from the islands on 7th August. The adult was presumably the returning 1989 or 1992 hybrid and the young a second-generation hybrid. Both birds were seen together at Musselburgh, Lothian, on 28th August.



Plate 155. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*, Essex, May 1994 (Rob Wilson)



Plate 156. Second-summer Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, Western Isles, 14th May 1994 (John Meicalf)

Plate 157. Below, female Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* with hybrid chick among Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis*, Farne Islands, Northumberland, July 1994 (Mai Cottam)



Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0, 21, 2)

Dyfed Fishguard, first-winter, 10th-11th January, photo. (D. J. Astins, B. Atkinson, S. Earl *et al.*).

Lothian Musselburgh area, first-winter, 16th December to 1995, photo. (C. N. Davison, K. Gillon *et al.*).

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1993 Wexford Wexford Harbour, 17th March to 2nd April (*Brit. Birds* 87: 533), stayed to 1st May.

(North America; winters USA and Mexico) Two new individuals break the recent dearth of records. Coincidentally, the only previous Scottish record was at exactly the same site in 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 557).

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* (3, 16, 1)

Cumbria Foulney Island, 3rd-5th June, photo. (J. Fairhurst, B. Makin, C. Raven *et al.*).

Yorkshire, West Fairburn Ings, 3rd June (J. Glendinning), presumed same as Cumbria.

(Caribbean, West Africa, Indian and Pacific Oceans) The unbroken run since 1988 continues. The West Yorkshire bird was seen at 07.30 and then—presumably the same individual—appeared in Cumbria at midday, thus illustrating how far and fast some of our rarities can move in a day.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* (20, 88, 7)

Buckinghamshire Willen Lake, two, 16th-21st May, photo. (N. J. Phillips *et al.*), probably same as Norfolk.

Essex Abberton Reservoir, 3rd-12th May, photo. (D. Rhymes *et al.*) (plate 155, on page 521).

Gwent Llandegfedd Reservoir, adult, 15th-28th July, photo. (C. Hatch, J. Waddington *et al.*).

Hereford & Worcester Bredon's Hardwick, 1st May (R. W. Price, S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, 5th-6th May, photo. (J. R. Hunter, R. J. Price *et al.*), also in East Sussex.

Norfolk Rockland Broad, two, 15th May (D. Lester *et al.*), probably same as Buckinghamshire.

Sussex, East Rye, 7th-8th May (D. J. Funnell *et al.*), same as Kent.

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, 2nd May (B. Milton *et al.*).

(South Eurasia, Africa and Australia; European population winters Africa) An above-average showing. Previous records of duos were in West Glamorgan in 1974, Sussex in 1979, Avon in 1983 and Hampshire in 1988. Most probably related to pairs if, as *BWP* suggests, pair-bonding persists from year to year. No documentation has been received of two said to have been at Cley, Norfolk, on 22nd May.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 606, 20)

Cumbria Barrow-in-Furness, adult, 17th July, photo. (M. Cope, C. Raven *et al.*), presumed same as Barton-on-Humber, Humberside, below.

Devon Dawlish Warren, adult, 6th-7th August (R. L. & Mrs J. M. Smith *et al.*).

Essex Hanningfield Reservoir, adult, 31st July (J. Miller *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Frampton-on-Severn, juvenile, 31st October (N. Smart).

Grampian Loeh Spynie, adult, 20th July (C. Gervaise *et al.*).

Hertfordshire Wilstone Reservoir, juvenile, 24th-27th August (G. J. White, R. Young *et al.*).

Humberside Barton-on-Humber, adult, 16th July (G. P. Catley, S. Routledge), presumed same as Cumbria. Southfield Reservoir, adult, 5th August (C. Featherstone). North Cave, juvenile, 21st-24th October, photo. (G. Dayes, S. Martin *et al.*).

Leicestershire Watermead Park, adult, 12th July, photo. (R. E. Davis, R. M. Fray, P. Morris *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Messingham, juvenile, 25th July, photo. (J. T. Harriman *et al.*).

Lothian Gladhouse Reservoir, juvenile, 15th October (Dr L. L. J. Vick).

Norfolk Lakenheath Flashes, adult or second-summer, 5th June, photo. (M. G. Kerby, S. H. Mustoe, D. R. Watson *et al.*). Sheringham, Cley and Blakeney area, adult or second-summer,

4th-11th November (K. B. Shepherd *et al.*). Locality in Broadland, adult, 19th-23rd November, photo. (B. W. Jarvis *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Lound, adult, 5th August (W. Collingham, G. & P. Hobson *et al.*). Colwick Park, Netherfield and Holme Pierrepont, juvenile, 24th September to 9th October (A. S. Boot, M. C. Dennis *et al.*).

Shetland Hillwell and Loch of Spiggie, 7th-14th June, photo. (J. N. Dymond, M. Mellor, A. Sinclair *et al.*).

Shropshire Ellesmere, juvenile, 6th November to 1st December (R. M. Stokes, M. Webb *et al.*).

Suffolk Walberswick, 6th-7th June (S. H. Piotrowski, C. S. Waller *et al.*). Minsmere, adult, 4th August (J. King, R. Moore *et al.*).

1993 Cambridgeshire Nene Washes, 28th-29th May, photo. (J. R. Baxter, J. B. Kemp, K. J. Warrington *et al.*).

1993 Lancashire Marton Mere, second-summer, 25th-26th June (*Brit. Birds* 87: 536), to 28th (per M. Jones).

(Southeast Europe, Asia and Africa; European population winters Africa) An average number, but containing the earliest ever juvenile and some particularly noteworthy late-autumn individuals lingering in the mild weather, one of which remained into December and became Britain's latest ever.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (2, 27, 2)

Lothian Musselburgh, 6th February (Dr B. D. & Dr M. Griffin).

Shetland Wadbister Voe, recently dead, oiled, 12th February, photo. (M. Heubeck *et al.*), now at National Museum of Scotland.

(Circumpolar Arctic) Another tantalising duo, including a standard Shetland corpse, but also a further live individual at the same site as one in 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 536).

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (6, 31, 1)

Dorset Hengistbury Head, 20th April (D. N. Smith).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) A fairly typical date, but only the second Dorset record, the first being in 1989. The patterns of occurrences and ages of Great Spotted Cuckoos in Britain & Ireland were recently reviewed by Peter Lansdown and illustrated by Ren Hathway (*Brit. Birds* 88: 141-149).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (22, 35, 2)

Dyfed Near St David's, 30th October (K. J. S. Devonald, T. J. Price).

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Antrim Carncastle, found moribund, 31st October.

(North and Central America; winters south to Argentina) The first two since 1991 and the first in Wales this century.

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (64, 22, 0)

IRELAND

1993 Cork Inchydoney, found injured, died, 27th April.

(South Europe, Russia, West Asia and Northwest Africa; winters Africa) The first since one in Dorset in 1990, and only the fourth this century in Ireland.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (many, 112, 3)

Orkney Egilsay, ♂, ♀, 8th October (A. & P. Sansom). Papa Westray, age and sex uncertain, 23rd October to 3rd December (M. Gray, Mr & Mrs W. Irvine *et al.*); presumed same, North



Plate 158. Juvenile American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, St Mary's Island, Tyne & Wear, October 1994 (Ian Fisher)



Plate 159. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, Co. Wexford, August 1994 (Rob Wilson)

Plate 160. Below, juvenile Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*, Grampian, November 1994 (Alan Tate)





Plate 161. Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus*, Holyhead, Anglesey, Gwynedd, January 1994 (Rob Wilson)



Plate 162. First-winter Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, Coward's Marsh, Dorset, 3rd December 1994 (G. J. Armstrong)

Plate 163. Below, juvenile Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*, Cumbria, October 1994 (Rob Wilson)



Ronaldsay, as second-winter ♂, 10th-17th December (M. Gray, T. Outlaw, H. Swanney *et al.*).
Shetland See 'At sea' below.

At sea Sea area Forties, 58° 34' N 01° 35' W, first-winter ♂, taken into care exhausted on board vessel, 18th October, photo., released Fetlar, Shetland, 25th, last noted 17th February 1995 (P. M. Ellis, J. Garriock *et al.*).

1993 Western Isles Bornish, South Uist, 23rd June (*Brit. Birds* 87: 538), observers were G. W. Dodds *et al.*

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1993 Donegal Aranmore Island, 24th June (*Brit. Birds* 87: 538), was immature ♂, present from 22nd June to mid July 1994.

(Circumpolar Arctic; disperses south in some winters) A fairly typical number of records for recent years. The male released on Fetlar may have a lonely time as there were no records of females there in 1994, for the first time in over 30 years.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (1, 9, 0)

1993 Norfolk Burnham Norton, 25th July (J. Charman, P. R. Colston *et al.*).

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1913 Down St John's Point, ♂, collected, 30th October. The specimen is in the National Museum, Dublin.

(Northwest Africa and Iberia to southern Iran; winters Africa) This brings the 1993 total to two, with one seen in 1992, but a seven-year gap to the previous records in 1984 of this very difficult species. The Irish record predates the previous first for Britain & Ireland.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (150, 348, 10)

Kent Capel Le Ferne, 23rd April (D. A. Gibson). Capel Le Ferne and Folkestone, 19th-20th May, photo. (B. Cox, J. A. Flynn, D. A. Gibson *et al.*).

Norfolk Beeston, 27th-29th April (Miss J. R. Damon, D. A. Riley *et al.*); presumed same, Titchwell, 30th (A. Culshaw, N. Harwood, G. Shorroek).

Northumberland Bamburgh, 26th April (D. G. & Mrs S. A. Bell); same, Farne Islands, 26th (M. Cottam).

Shetland Noss, 2nd-30th July (C. Barton, C. Donald, E. Stuart *et al.*).

Strathclyde Ailsa Craig, recently dead, 10th July, photo., now at National Museum of Scotland (B. Zonfrillo). Lunga, Treshnish Isles, Argyll, 11th July, photo. (R. Craig, A. Mawdsley, J. W. Proudlock *et al.*).

Suffolk North Warren, 23rd April (R. N. Maeklin).

Tyne & Wear Jesmond, 13th, 15th June (M. P. Frankis).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 27th April (H. M. & W. H. Lealman, H. J. Whitehead).

1992 Hereford & Worcester Upton Warren, 24th May (P. S. Anstis *et al.*).

1992 Strathclyde Balgray Reservoir, 2nd May (*Brit. Birds* 87: 539), to 16th.

1993 Kent Capel Le Ferne, 29th June (D. A. Gibson). Cheriton, 20th September (D. A. Gibson).

(South Eurasia, Northwest and East Africa; winters Africa) A below-average total for recent years, but the one in Shetland was the longest-staying individual so far. The identification pitfalls of this species were discussed by Alan Dean (*Brit. Birds* 87: 174-177) and subsequent correspondence has indicated variability in the shape of the belly-patch (*Brit. Birds* 88: 52, 335).

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (154, 327, -)

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Northwest Africa; winters Africa) This species is no longer considered by the Committee, but, for the benefit of county and regional records committees, M. J. Rogers recently reviewed the

identification pitfalls and assessment problems relating to this species (*Brit. Birds* 88: 221-223).

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 89, 1)

Cornwall Penlee, 29th May (R. J. Bedford, J. S. Holmes).

1992 Kent Monkton, 15th June, photo. (A. E. Eley).

(South and East Europe, West Asia and Northwest Africa; winters Africa) One to three individuals of this spectacular species have occurred annually since 1989.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* (0, 3, 1)

Western Isles St Kilda, 21st September (T. J. Dix, J. Vaughan).

(Iberia and Morocco eastwards through the Mediterranean to Kazakhstan and Afghanistan; mainly resident, but partial migrant in east) A wonderful find in a spectacular setting. Previous records were in Dorset in 1961, Shetland in 1978 and Scilly in 1985, all in April.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (40, 394, -)

1993 Gwynedd South Stack, Anglesey, 25th May (the late A. G. Clarke).

1993 Scilly St Mary's, 12th October, present since 6th (D. J. Holman *et al.*).

1993 Shetland Banna Minn, West Burra, 26th-27th May (*Brit. Birds* 87: 541), named observers should include H. R. Harrop.

(South Eurasia; winters North Africa) These additional records bring the 1993 total to 20. This species is no longer considered by the Committee.

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* (37, 5, 0)

1992 Dorset Portland, 2nd May (I. R. Dickie, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

(Spain and North Africa eastwards to Manchuria; mainly resident and dispersive, but eastern populations winter south to Pakistan) A marvellous find and somewhat overdue, the first British record to come before the BOURC and predated only by an inexplicable series of records in Ireland: 30 in January 1956, five in March 1956, two in May 1956 and five in March 1958.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 242, 20)

Essex Barling, 23rd-27th May, photo. (P. Green, A. R. Perkins, C. Todd *et al.*) (plate 167, on page 533).

Humberside Messingham, 23rd April (W. Gillatt).

Kent Stodmarsh, 8th May (G. F. A. Burton *et al.*). North Foreland, 28th October (M. H. Davies).

Norfolk Winterton, juvenile, 1st-8th November, photo. (P. K. Batchelor, B. J. Murphy, J. C. Wasse *et al.*), presumed same, 15th (P. J. Ransome); presumed same, Cley, 12th-14th (M. Kenefick *et al.*); presumed same, Sheringham, 14th (K. B. Shepherd, M. P. Taylor). Brancaster, Burnham Norton, Holme and Titchwell area, three adults, 6th-11th November (D. Crisp, B. J. Robson, M. E. S. Rooney, R. Q. Skeen *et al.*), possibly same as Nottinghamshire.

Northumberland Doxford Lake, 18th-19th November; same, Long Newton, 20th (R. Harvey *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Clumber Park, two, 29th October, 1st November, three, 30th-31st October, 2nd-3rd November, photo., all probably adults (I. Draycott, A. J. Mackay *et al.*), possibly also in Norfolk.

Scilly Tresco, 28th February to 28th March, photo. (R. Gleadle, R. J. Hathway, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, 27th May (D. Fairhurst, D. T. Ireland *et al.*). Landguard, 26th October (I. R. Hartley, D. Rafe, J. Tobias *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 3rd May (J. F. Cooper). Cuckmere Valley, 19th May (R. Izzard, N. J. Thomas).

Wight, Isle of West High Down, 18th May (F. Hamilton, R. Perolls).

1993 Essex East Tilbury, 26th September, now considered same as Isle of Grain, Kent, 25th (*Brit. Birds* 87: 542).

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Cork Cape Clear Island, 3rd May. Ballycotton, 4th September.

1992 Wicklow Arklow, 20th April.

(South and East Eurasia and Africa; winters Africa) An above-average year, the only higher totals being 64 in 1987 and 32 in 1990, when small groups also occurred in late autumn.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (1, 0, 1)

Suffolk Landguard, first-winter, 4th-10th November, trapped 10th, photo. (M. C. Marsh, N. Odin, B. J. Small *et al.*) (fig. 5), taken by Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* on 10th, tail feathers retained by R. I. Thorpe.

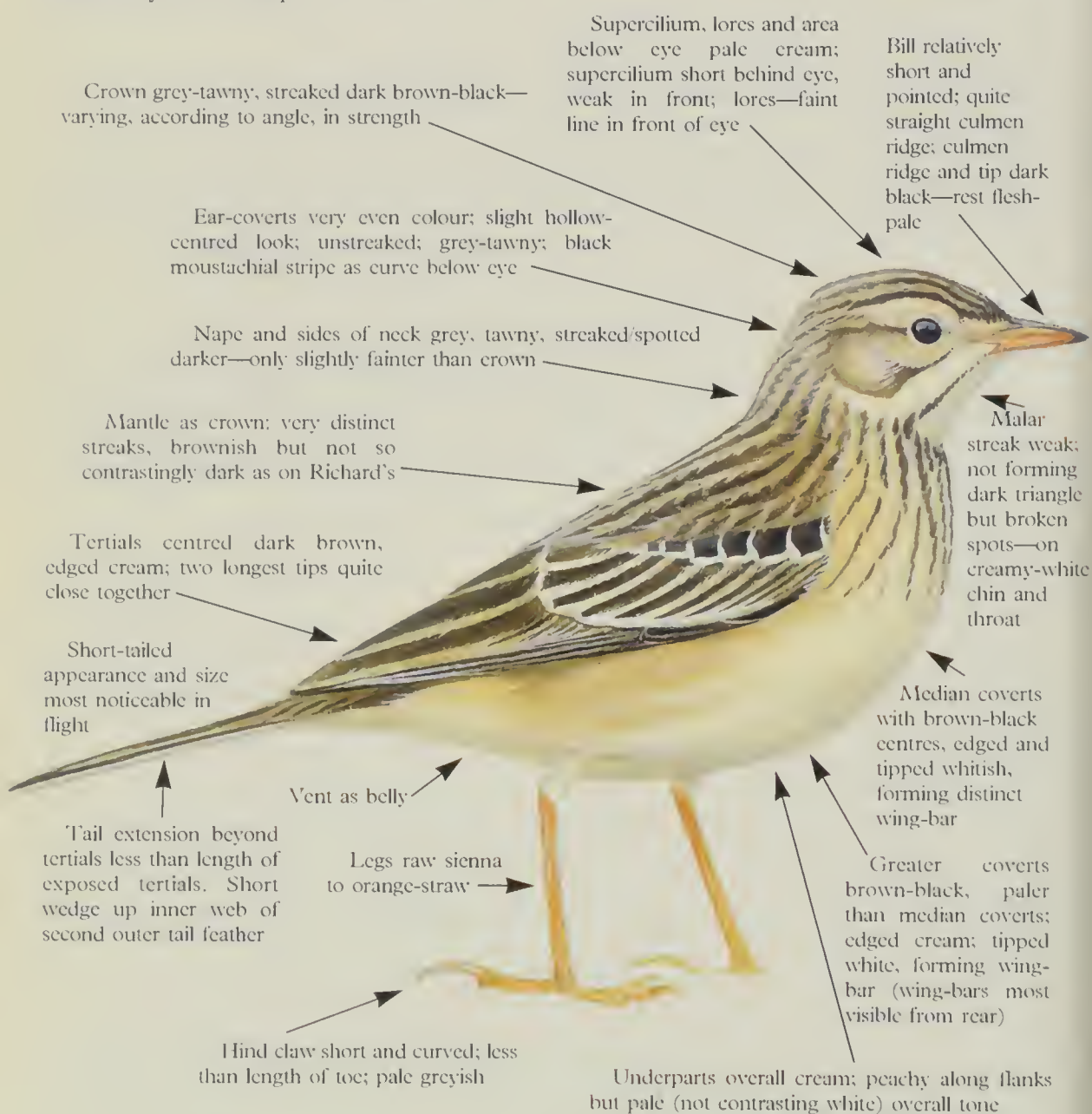


Fig. 5. Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*, Suffolk, November 1994 (Brian Small)

(Southern Siberia, China and northeastern India; winters India, Sri Lanka and Andaman Islands) A number of earlier claims of this 'difficult' species remain under consideration. This one, well watched, photographed and examined in the hand before its ultimate fate as a meal for the local Kestrel, proved the ideal candidate for acceptance and one which will greatly assist the Committee in its assessments of some of the others. We hope that the backlog can be cleared without further long delays. This record is still to be considered by the BOURC regarding a change of category, from B to A, on the British List.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 185, 6)

Essex Pitsea, 13th January to 26th February, trapped 19th February, photo. (S. Woods *et al.*). Fife Isle of May, 3rd November (A. Robinson).

Hampshire Warsash, 7th November (D. A. Christie).

Scilly St Mary's, 14th October (E. D. Lloyd). St Martin's, 24th October (R. J. Arnfield).

Shetland Tingwall, 24th September to 1st October, trapped 24th September, photo. (G. W. Petrie, P. Slater *et al.*).

1992 Kent Capel Le Ferne, 12th-15th October, photo. (D. A. Gibson, J. P. Siddle *et al.*).

1993 Kent Sandwich Bay, 6th October (*Brit. Birds* 87: 542), now considered inadequately documented.

1993 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 24th September (M. Gray *et al.*).

1993 Shetland Culswick, 2nd and 5th October (*Brit. Birds* 87: 542), 2nd only, observer C. D. R. Heard only. Additional records: Dale of Walls, 3rd October (Dr C. F. Mackenzie), presumed same, 5th (C. D. R. Heard). Norwick, two, 30th September, one to 3rd October (J. Coutts, J. M. & T. P. Drew, D. J. Rigby). Fair Isle, second individual, 3rd October (D. Suddaby). Fetlar, 6th October (*Brit. Birds* 87: 542), observer was B. H. Thomason.

(Northeast Russia to Central and East Asia; winters southern Asia) After the flood of records in recent years (the additional records bring the 1993 total to 35), this was a very poor year. Winter records are no longer considered particularly unusual.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (13, 32, 8)

Scilly Tresco, 27th-28th October (C. Bradshaw, R. J. Hathway, D. J. Holman *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, at least four: 15th-16th September, trapped 15th (Dr R. Riddington, G. Thompson *et al.*); 16th-18th September (N. Ward *et al.*); 16th-19th September (G. Thompson *et al.*); 1st-9th October (N. C. Green, G. Thompson *et al.*). Foula, 18th-28th September, photo. (M. J. McKee, C. Turner). Out Skerries, 13th-14th October, trapped 14th, photo. (P. M. Ellis, Dr B. Marshall) (plates 185 & 186, on page 544).

Yorkshire, North Filey, first-winter, trapped, 9th October, photo. (J. M. & R. G. Bayldon, P. J. Dunn, C. C. Thomas *et al.*).

1993 Shetland Fair Isle, 27th September to 5th October, trapped 29th, photo. (A. J. Leitch, S. J. Read *et al.*) (plates 183 & 184, on page 544).

(Northeast Russia to Central and East Asia; winters Southeast Asia) This is a record annual total, the previous highest being six in 1991. The two individuals outside Shetland (including the first for Scilly) bring additional hope to rarity-seekers away from the Northern Isles.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (30, 277, 15)

Cornwall Sennen, 14th October (P. H. Aley, P. A. St Pierre, R. W. White). Pentire Point, 18th October (G. J. Conway).

Essex Shoeburyness, 21st-22nd May, photo. (I. Prentice *et al.*).

Kent Elmley, 1st October (J. A. Rowlands).

Norfolk Sheringham, 2nd October (S. C. Votier). Brancaster, 6th November (V. Eve).

Orkney Gracmeshill Loch, in song, 16th-18th May (R. G. Adam, K. E. Hague). North

Ronaldsay, 7th May (M. Gray, E. J. & M. G. Scott); 13th May (A. E. Duncean *et al.*); 27th October (S. D. Stansfield).

Seilly Treseo, 10th October (R. M. & R. P. Fray, A. J. Mackay *et al.*). Gugh, 14th-15th October (M. J. McKee, D. J. Price, C. Turner *et al.*); presumed same, St Mary's, 15th to at least 21st (O. J. Leyshon *et al.*).

Warwickshire Lawford Heath, 22nd-28th October (R. E. Harbird, D. J. Seanlan *et al.*).

Western Isles St Kilda, 21st-24th May (T. J. Dix, J. Vaughan *et al.*).

1990 Norfolk Weybourne, 19th May, photo. (R. H. Chittenden *et al.*).

1993 Humberside Spurn, 16th September (M. Barnett *et al.*).

1993 Merseyside Red Rocks, 1st-2nd October (Dr J. E. Turner, E. Williams).

1993 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 10th September (M. Gray *et al.*).

IRELAND

Cork Dursey Island, 13th October.

(Arctic Eurasia; winters India and Africa) This is an above-average total, but a far cry from that of 46 in 1992. The Warwickshire record is only the eighth inland. The additional records bring the 1993 total to ten.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

M. f. feldegg (0, 6, 0)

In addition to the records already listed as no longer considered acceptable (*Brit. Birds* 87: 543), as the outcome of a review by the BOU Records Committee, the records shown below were assessed as no longer acceptable in a subsequent review by the Rarities Committee:

1958 Dorset Portland, ♂, 9th October (*Brit. Birds* 53: 171).

1960 Shetland Vaila, ♂, 15th May (*Brit. Birds* 63: 291).

1974 Sussex, West Thorney Island, ♂, 23rd July (*Brit. Birds* 68: 329).

1978 Scilly Tresco, ♂, 26th June (*Brit. Birds* 73: 518).

(Balkans east to Afghanistan and Iran; winters Northwestern India and East Africa) The only records still considered acceptable are Fair Isle, Shetland, 7th-9th May 1970, Lothian on 28th April 1984, Northumberland on 7th June 1985, Suffolk on 30th June 1985, Dyfed on 7th May 1986 and Oxfordshire during 4th June to 10th July 1988.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 67, 7)

Cleveland Haverton Hill Ponds, Billingham, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 14th, 18th-19th August, video-recorded (M. A. Blick *et al.*).

Essex/Greater London King George V Reservoir, first-winter, 22nd August (R. M. Callf, A. Middleton, P. J. Vines).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 21st September (Dr D. H. Hatton, Dr C. C. McGuigan *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 1st-4th September (N. J. Riddiford, G. Thompson *et al.*).

Quendale, first-winter, 19th September (L. C. Cook, H. R. Harrop *et al.*).

Out Skerries, first-winter, 23rd-24th September (M. S. Ponsford, K. E. Vinicombe, M. J. & M. P. Willmot *et al.*).

Skaw, Unst, first-winter, 26th September to 8th October, trapped 28th September (C. & J. Baxter, M. G. Pennington *et al.*).

1992 Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, first-winter, 22nd-24th September (T. J. Dix, J. Vaughan).

1993 Greater London Beddington Sewage-farm, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 24th-28th August, photo. (A. Greensmith, J. S. Walsh *et al.*) (plate 169, on page 533).

IRELAND

1993 Donegal Aranmore Island, 4th October.

(Northeast and East Russia, West Siberia, West and Central Asia; winters southern and Southeast Asia) The most recorded in a single year. Although there were no spring records in Britain & Ireland, there were reports of successful breeding in Sweden and four pairs nesting in Poland (the first breeding record) (*Brit. Birds* 88: 40).

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* (29, 9, 1)

Lincolnshire Saltfleetby, adult, 14th-18th November, photo. (P. M. Troake *et al.*).

(Mountains in Iberia and Northwest Africa, the Alps east to Japan; winters in lower valleys) Singles in consecutive years following a two-year absence. The two 1990 records were preceded by an 11-year absence. This is only the third autumn record since 1958.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 103, 8)

Dorset Portland, first-summer, trapped, 11th June, photo. (K. Pritchard, M. Rogers, R. J. Taylor).

Kent Dungeness, first-summer, in song, trapped 18th May (G. M. Haig, D. Walker *et al.*); first-summer, in song, 2nd-9th June, trapped 6th, photo. (D. Walker *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 22nd May (A. H. J. Harrop, J. Wright). Saltfleet, first-winter, trapped 17th September, photo. (S. A. Britton, P. G. Chapman, J. R. Mawer *et al.*).

Lothian Gullane, in song, 25th-26th May (D. G. Andrew, Lady Leighton).

Shetland Sumburgh, trapped 17th June, photo. (H. R. Harrop, A. McCall, G. W. Petrie *et al.*). Seafield, Lerwick, first-winter, 25th-26th August (P. V. Harvey, K. Osborn *et al.*).

1992 **Norfolk** Holkham Meals, first-winter, 18th September (V. Eve, M. E. S. Rooney).

1993 **Shetland** Helendale, 20th May (*Brit. Birds* 87: 546), to 23rd.

(Scandinavia, East Europe and West Asia; winters Africa) Two in one year in both Kent and Lincolnshire, but none on Fair Isle is very unusual. This is the highest total since 1989.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (3, 10, 2)

Norfolk Great Yarmouth, ♀ or first-winter, 18th-20th October, photo. (P. R. Allard *et al.*) (plates 174 & 175, on page 537).

Suffolk Landguard, ♂, 26th October, photo. (M. C. Marsh, N. Odin *et al.*) (plate 176, on page 537).

(Northeast Europe across Asia to Japan; winters Southeast Asia) Two individuals in each of two consecutive years, following a four-year gap. There have now been more records of this superb species on the east coast of England than in Shetland. Singles were also reported in Denmark on 6th-9th October and in Sweden on 14th August (*Brit. Birds* 88: 275).

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

S. t. maura/stejnegeri (1, 214, 13)

Individuals showing the characters of one or other of the eastern races *S. t. maura* or *stajnegeri* were recorded as follows:

Dorset Portland, first-winter ♀, 7th-9th November, trapped 8th (M. Cade *et al.*).

Kent St Margaret's Bay, ♂, 14th-15th October (P. A. Laurie).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, ♀ or first-winter, 22nd September (G. P. Catley).

Norfolk Cromer, ♂, 4th-5th September, photo. (G. P. H. & M. P. Lee *et al.*). Blakeney Point, ♀ or first-winter, 24th October (M. P. Shurmer). Burnham Overy, ♀ or first-winter, 4th-7th November (R. I. Harold, M. E. S. Rooney).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♀ or first-winter, 10th-11th November (P. J. Donnelly, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, 8th-9th May (J. Reid, Dr R. Riddington, G. Thompson *et al.*). Spiggie, first-winter ♂, 28th September to 2nd October (J. J. Sweeney *et al.*). Sumburgh, ♀ or first-winter, 30th September to 1st October (N. Alford, N. R. Stoeks, D. Suddaby *et al.*). Whalsay, first-winter ♂, 21st October (C. Donald). Easter Quarff, first-winter ♂, 4th November (P. M. Ellis).

Sussex, West Selsey Bill, ♀ or first-winter, 8th-9th October (M. J. W. Hay, K. W. Maycock, O. Mitchell *et al.*).

1991 **Cleveland** Seaton Carew, ♀ or first-winter, 9th-13th October (G. Ieeton *et al.*).



Plate 164. Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Merseyside, 24th April 1994 (Steve Young)



Plate 165. Female Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Lancashire, May 1994 (P. J. Marsh)

Plate 166. Below, Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Titchwell, Norfolk, 2nd July 1994 (Dave Stewart/Birding Images)





Plate 167. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, Essex, May 1994 (Rob Wilson)

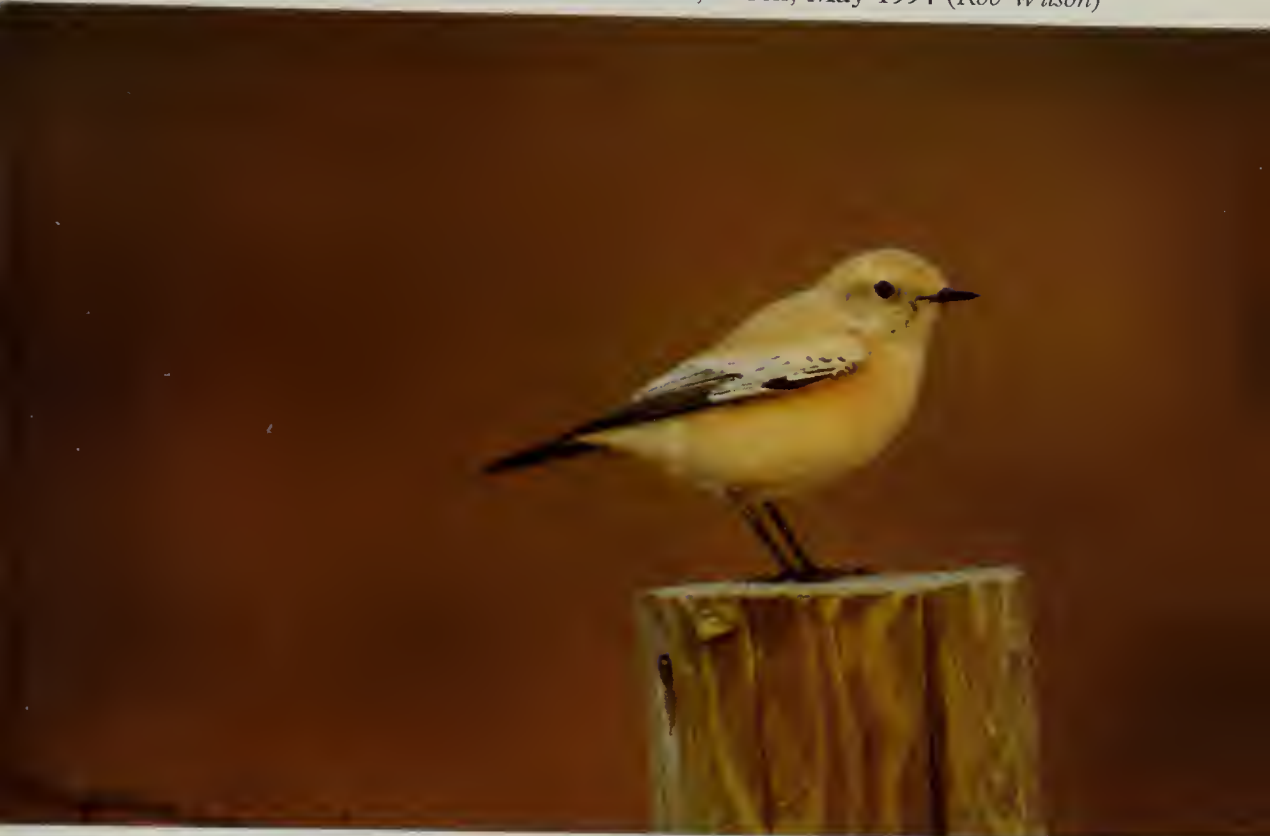


Plate 168. First-winter male Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Dorset, 11th October 1994 (Peter Coe)

Plate 169. Below, juvenile Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Greater London, 24th August 1993 (A. Greensmith)



1991 Yorkshire, North Kettleness Point, ♀ or first-winter, 12th-27th October, photo. (T. J. Barker, R. S. Slack, A. White).

1992 Norfolk Burnham Norton, ♂, 6th May (V. Eve, M. E. S. Rooney). Cromer, ♂, 8th June (M. P. Lee, T. Wright). Holme, ♂, 7th-8th June (D. J. Holman, R. Q. Skeen, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*). Kelling, ♀ or first-winter, 13th October (A. Wilkinson). -

1993 Cornwall Land's End, first-winter ♂, 12th-14th October (D. J. Holman *et al.*).

1993 Grampian Near Banchory, ♂, in territory, 2nd-24th June, photo. (G. W. Rebecca, K. D. Shaw, A. W. Thorpe *et al.*).

1993 Scilly St Agnes, ♂, 13th-15th May (T. M. Melling *et al.*).

(White Sea, eastwards across Siberia, East Caucasus and northern Iran) These records continue the high totals of the previous two years. Careful examination of the colour of the axillaries is important to confirm records of males in spring.

The September 1994 male at Cromer, Norfolk, was the earliest-ever in autumn by one week. The westward spread is demonstrated, for instance, by the recent breeding records in Finland (*Limn.* 28 (6): 16; *Brit. Birds* 88: 275).

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 8, 1)

Shetland Whalsay, 20th-21st September, photo. (M. S. Ponsford, K. E. Vinicombe, M. J. & M. P. Willmott *et al.*).

(South and Central Eurasia from Russia and Turkey eastwards; winters Northeast and East Africa and from Arabia eastwards to Central India) This was the first record for Shetland and, like several other individuals in Britain, this one frequented a golf course. Observers should always be wary of the pitfall of unusually pale Northern Wheatears *O. oenanthe* when considering the identification of this tricky species.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (3, 27, 4)

Cleveland Seaton Snook, first-winter ♂, 6th November, photo. (B. Beck, G. Joynt *et al.*) (plate 195, on page 556).

Kent Sheerness, first-winter ♂, 23rd October (Dr A. M. Hanby, J. A. Rowlands *et al.*).

Orkney Sanday, first-winter ♂, 22nd October (K. Fairclough, E. R. Meek).

Suffolk Fagbury Cliffs, first-winter ♀, 24th-27th October, trapped 26th, photo. (N. Odin, S. H. Piotrowski, M. Smith *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and South-central Asia; winters East Africa) A very good showing, only the five in 1991 and four in 1988 are comparably high totals. This species has now been recorded annually since 1985.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (11, 33, 5)

Cornwall Torpoint, first-winter ♀, 27th November to 16th December, photo. (S. G. Christmas, K. Pellow, L. A. C. Truscott *et al.*); presumed same, near Hayle, 21st-24th December (P. A. Rutter, L. P. Williams).

Dorset Portland, first-winter ♂, 11th October, photo. (P. J. Coe, G. Walbridge *et al.*) (plate 168, on page 533).

Hereford & Worcester Castleton, Herefordshire, ♂, 7th November (S. P. Coney, P. J. Eldridge, K. A. Mason).

Lancashire Blackpool, first-winter ♂, 11th-21st November, photo. (E. Stirling *et al.*).

Norfolk Weybourne, ♂, 5th November; same, Cley, 6th, photo. (P. Feakes *et al.*).

(North Africa, Northwest Arabia, east to Mongolia; winters Sahara, Arabia and Pakistan) This total is echoed only by those of 1989 and 1991. The inland record is very unusual. Autumn singles were also reported from France, the Netherlands (two) and Sweden (*Brit. Birds* 88: 276).



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Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* (1, 4, 1)

Norfolk Burnham Overy, first-winter ♂, 18th September (T. Cowan, I. Macey, A. Nicholson *et al.*).

(Central Siberia east to Japan; winters India, Southeast Asia and Indonesia) The Committee also wishes to thank S. Huggins and P. Clement for their additional documentation of this remarkable record. This was the earliest of the six British & Irish records; previous records were in 1954, 1977, 1984, 1985 and 1992.

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (1, 41, 1)

Orkney North Hoy, 16th October (T. Prescott, M. D. Sutton).

IRELAND

1991 Clare Loop Head, first-year, trapped, 12th October.

(North America and Eastern Siberia; winters eastern USA, West Indies and Central America) The first since 1991 and the first for Orkney. Observers will need to study future occurrences carefully, since *C. m. bicknelli* is shortly to be split as a separate species by the BOURC (*Ibis* in press). A paper by Dr Alan Knox, illustrated by Alan Harris, will be published shortly in *British Birds*.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 26, 4)

Dorset Bournemouth, ♂, *T. r. atrogularis*, 7th January (E. D. Lloyd).

Essex The Naze, first-winter ♂, *T. r. ruficollis*, 29th September to 7th October, photo. (T. Mendham, B. Smith, S. D. Wood *et al.*) (plates 170-173, on page 536).

Shetland Fair Isle, two first-winter ♂♂, *T. r. atrogularis*: one 16th-17th October, probably since 15th (M. Newall, Dr R. Riddington, N. C. Ward *et al.*); and the other 17th (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

1993 Kent Lydd, ♀, *T. r. atrogularis*, 2nd May (M. J. Lawson, P. Simpson, G. Taylor *et al.*).

(Central Asia; winters northern India and China) The superb bird in Essex will be considered by the BOURC as the first record of *T. r. ruficollis* for Britain & Ireland. The Kent record was the first-ever in spring, and two at once on Fair Isle is unprecedented.

American Robin *Turdus migratorius* (11, 19, 0)

(North America; winters USA south to Guatemala) The fresh corpse of a first-winter male was found in Felixstowe, Suffolk, on 2nd November, amongst on-deck containers on a recently arrived ship, but at present its port of origin is unknown. In any case, the bird may well have died well outside British waters.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (3, 11, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, adult, trapped 21st September, photo., dead 23rd, now at National Museum of Scotland (S. A. Bacon, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

(Western Siberia and Central Asia to Japan; winters India and Southeast Asia) Last recorded in 1992; 11 of the 15 records have been in Shetland.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 48, 6)

Norfolk Mundesley, 21st September (J. Appleton, P. J. Heath *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, 19th September, photo. (M. J. McKee, C. Turner). Whalsay, first-winter, trapped 20th September, photo. (Dr B. Marshall, K. E. Vinicombe, M. P. Willmott *et al.*). Fair Isle, 10th-13th October; another, 15th (G. Thompson *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, first-winter, trapped 10th October, photo. (D. P. Appleton, P. J. Dunn, D. & J. W. Sykes *et al.*).

(East Eurasia from Central Russia to northern Japan; winters Philippines and



Plates 170-173. First-winter male Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* of red-throated nominate race, Essex, September-October 1994 (top two, Robin Chittenden; above, Rob Wilson; below, Dave Stewart/Birding Images)





Plates 174-176. Red-flanked Bluetails *Tarsiger cyamurus*: above, female or first-winter, Norfolk, October 1994 (R. Chittenden); below, male, Suffolk, 26th October 1994 (B. W. Jarvis)



Southeast Asia) The occurrence of two outside Shetland in one year is exceptional and brings the English total of these trusting little birds to six (and one in Wales).

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 16, 1)

Fife Clatto Reservoir, in song, 16th-25th July, photo. (S. T. Buckland, C. & Mrs A.-M. Smout, S. Taylor *et al.*).

(Central and East Europe and West-central Asia; winters Southeast Africa) The first Scottish record away from Shetland. The dates echo the records in Suffolk from 13th July to 3rd August 1984 and Norfolk during 8th-21st July 1989.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (47, 564, -)

1975 Sussex, East Locality withheld, 4th-5th September (*Brit. Birds* 72: 536), was 4th-5th October.

(Germany eastwards to European Russia, including northern Italy and Hungary; winters Africa south of the Sahara) South Coast reedbeds used by dispersing first-winter Aquatic Warblers in late summer and autumn are of great conservation value, as this species is now globally threatened. Records are, however, no longer considered by the Committee.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 23, 9)

Cleveland Newburn Bridge, first-winter, 17th-18th September, trapped 18th, photo. (T. G. Francis, G. Icton, P. Reid *et al.*). Marske, first-winter, trapped, 18th September (T. G. Dewdney, J. G. Green, B. & D. Richardson).

Orkney Holm, trapped 18th July (R. G. Adam, E. R. Meek *et al.*). Sanday, 22nd October (K. Fairclough, E. R. Meek). South Cara, South Ronaldsay, 23rd October (T. Dean).

Shetland Fair Isle, adult, 22nd-26th September, trapped 22nd (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); 24th-25th September, photo. (I. Wilson *et al.*). Quendale, 28th September to 1st October, photo. (P. M. Ellis, G. J. Fitchett *et al.*). Skaw, Unst, first-winter, 30th September to 1st October, trapped 30th (H. C. Towll, M. G. Pennington *et al.*).

1988 Seilly Tresco, 27th-28th October (S. J. Broyd *et al.*).

1993 Norfolk Sheringham, first-winter, trapped 24th September, photo. (K. B. Shepherd, S. C. Votier *et al.*) (plate 182, on page 544).

(South Russia and Asia; winters Southwest Asia and India) By far the highest annual total. The July individual in Orkney had surely arrived earlier in the spring. The fifth to seventh French records were also reported, two in August and one in October, and a further individual was reported from the Netherlands in September (*Brit. Birds* 88: 276).

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 18, 1)

Shetland Kergord, age uncertain, 23rd-27th May, trapped 27th, photo. (P. M. Ellis, W. Jackson, A. McCall, D. Suddaby *et al.*).

(Eurasia eastwards from Finland; winters India and Sri Lanka) Only the third spring record, previous ones having been in Humberside on 28th May 1984 and Orkney on 19th May 1993. The species occurred in only three years during 1958-83, but was recorded in seven years during 1984-94.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 155, 6)

Kent Dungeness, in song, 24th-25th May (C. Lock, R. J. Price *et al.*). Elmley, in song, 12th-25th June, photo., carrying nest material 19th (R. Gomes, J. A. Rowlands *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, in song, 11th May to 26th June, photo. (T. C. Davies *et al.*). Rockland Broad, in song, 22nd May (D. Lester).

Shetland Hillwell, 12th May (J. N. Dymond *et al.*). Geosetter, in song, 22nd May (A. & L. Amery, B. Brydges, H. R. Harrop).

1993 **Kent Elmley**, in song, 27th May to at least 5th June (*Brit. Birds* 87: 553), to 11th.

1993 **Suffolk Minsmere**, in song, 28th-29th May (M. A. Currie, D. T. Ireland, N. Lambert).

(Europe, Southwest and East Asia and North Africa; winters Africa) A fairly typical showing. The Elmley bird occupied the same patch of reeds as that in 1993 and may possibly have been the same individual, whilst that at Geosetter followed one on the same date there in 1993.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 49, 7)

Devon Start Point, 19th October (C. W. Stone).

Grampian Collieston, 11th-13th November, trapped 11th, photo. (T. W. Marshall, S. A. Ragnarsson, A. W. Thorpe *et al.*).

Kent Reculver, 14th September (M. J. Baldock, C. A. Osborne *et al.*).

Norfolk Cromer, 4th-5th September, photo. (A. P. Benson, K. B. Shepherd, T. Wright *et al.*).

Shetland Out Skerries, 27th August (J. F. & Mrs D. R. Cooper). **Fair Isle**, 11th September (Dr R. Riddington, N. C. Ward *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, in song, 5th June (D. & J. F. Cooper).

1993 **Orkney North Ronaldsay**, 14th September (the late A. G. Clarke, I. A. Roberts, N. E. Robinson).

(Northwest Russia east to Mongolia and south to Iran; winters India) Another excellent year, bettered only by 1993, for which the additional record brings the total to 13.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 301, 23)

Cleveland South Gare, ♂, 22nd May (M. A. Blick, T. G. Francis *et al.*).

Cornwall Nanjizal, ♂, 2nd May (R. Andrews, S. G. Rowe, V. A. Stratton). **Land's End**, ♀, 4th May (Dr A. M. Hanby).

Devon Lundy, ♀, 2nd to at least 7th May (J. K. Allen, A. Shepherd, K. Wimbush).

Dyfed Skomer, first-summer, sex uncertain, 14th May (R. W. Allen, P. Goddard *et al.*).

Skokholm, sex uncertain, 29th May (M. Betts, D. Hemsley *et al.*).

Greater London Walthamstow Marsh, in song, 15th May, photo. (D. Mitchell *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Theddlethorpe Dunes, ♂, trapped 28th June, photo. (M. & Mrs F. E. Boddy).

Man, Isle of Calf of Man, first-summer ♂, trapped 12th May, photo. (N. V. McCanch).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, ♂, 21st May (G. P. Bull, S. G. Keen *et al.*). **Rollsby**, ♂, 31st May (D. Parsons *et al.*). **Holkham Meals**, ♂, 31st May (M. E. S. Rooney, R. Q. Skeen).

Orkney South Ronaldsay, in song, 15th-17th May (J. & R. McCutcheon *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, ♂, 13th May (R. J. Higgins, J. P. Martin *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, four: first-summer ♂, 10th-12th May (Dr R. Riddington, N. Ward *et al.*); first-summer ♂, 12th May (J. Reid, G. Thompson, N. Ward *et al.*); first-summer, probably ♂, 12th-20th May (J. Reid, Dr R. Riddington, D. Riley *et al.*); first-summer ♀, trapped 30th May, photo. (J. Reid, Dr R. Riddington, N. Ward *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, ♂, 24th-25th May (M. A. Currie, D. Fairhurst *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, ♀, 31st May; ♂, 13th June (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).

Tayside Near Maryton, first-summer ♂, in song, 12th-17th May (M. S. Scott *et al.*).

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, ♀, 24th May (T. J. Dix *et al.*).

1992 **Sussex, East Beachy Head**, ♂, 21st-22nd May (R. H. & Mrs M. E. Charlwood).

(South Europe, West Turkey and Northwest Africa; winters North and West Africa) An above-average year; over 20 individuals have been recorded in only five previous years: 1987, 1988, 1989, 1992 and 1993. The Greater London record is very unusual.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (1, 37, 7)

Gwynedd Bardsey, ♂, 2nd-7th June, trapped 2nd (A. F. Silcocks *et al.*).



Plate 177. Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Norfolk, September 1994 (Rob Wilson)



Plates 178 & 179. Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*, Scilly, October 1994 (left, Tony Collinson; right, Steve Young)

Plate 180. Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, Bideford, Devon, 30th January 1995 (P. Hopkins)



Norfolk Burnham Overy, ♂, 21st April (V. Eve, R. I. Harold, M. E. S. Rooney *et al.*). Holme, ♂, 15th-16th May, photo. (R. Grimmett *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, 23rd-28th June (M. Campbell, G. Thompson *et al.*).

Suffolk Landguard, ♂, trapped 20th May, photo. (M. C. Marsh *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, ♂, 28th August to 29th September (R. E. & Mrs S. Smith *et al.*).

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, ♂, 23rd May, photo. (T. J. Dix, D. Lee, J. Vaughan *et al.*).

(South Europe, Middle East and North Africa) An exceptional year, comparable only with the total of eight individuals in 1992; this species has now been recorded every year since 1990.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 239, 8)

Grampian Collieston, first-winter, 24th-27th August (P. Cosgrove, P. Doyle *et al.*); first-winter, 24th-29th (T. W. Marshall *et al.*).

Kent Cliffe, in song, 1st June (P. A. Laurie).

Merseyside Seaforth, 15th September (P. Kinsella *et al.*).

Norfolk Wells, 1st-5th September, photo. (A. I. Bloomfield *et al.*) (plate 177).

Shetland Fetlar, 18th August (N. Acheson, D. Leech). Quendale, 14th-15th September (J. N. Dymond *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Priors Park, 16th-21st September, trapped 18th, photo. (C. Bradshaw, M. G. Cubitt, T. J. Tamms *et al.*).

1993 Kent Folkestone Warren, two, in song, 15th June to 1st July, photo., sound-recorded (D. A. Gibson *et al.*).

(Eurasia east from northern Germany; winters Pakistan, India and Indochina) A fairly typical total. Confusion can still arise with the next species, even for very experienced observers.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 173, 11)

Cornwall Kenidjack, 12th October (J. F. Ryan *et al.*); presumed same, 15th (N. M. Butler, M. I. Piercy *et al.*).

Humberside Flamborough Head, 22nd September (P. Willoughby).

Northumberland Farne Islands, 21st September (A. Baxter *et al.*).

Orkney Stronsay, 24th August, photo. (J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway *et al.*). North Ronaldsay, first-winter, trapped 4th September (A. J. Leitch, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*); first-winter, trapped 7th, retrapped 9th (A. J. Leitch *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, four: 18th September (C. J. Orsman, N. Ward); 20th-22nd, trapped 20th, dead 23rd (Dr R. Riddington, N. Ward *et al.*); 21st-22nd (G. Thompson, N. Ward *et al.*); 26th October (Dr R. Riddington, G. Thompson, N. Ward). Sandwick, 21st, 24th September (P. M. Ellis).

(Northern Fennoscandia east to Alaska; winters Southeast Asia) A very good year, matched only by 1984 and bettered by 17 in 1981 and 13 in 1993. There are still no spring records in Britain (although there is one from early July), but singles were reported from Estonia in June (*Brit. Birds* 88: 42) and Lithuania in May (*Brit. Birds* 88: 277).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 143, 4)

Kent St Margaret's Bay, 14th October (I. Ball, R. Heading).

Scilly St Mary's, 14th-16th, 19th October, photo. (M. R. & T. J. Benton, S. P. Dudley *et al.*) (plates 178 & 179).

Suffolk Kessingland, 2nd November (C. D. Darby, D. R. Eaton, R. Fairhead *et al.*).

Sussex, West Worthing, 26th-27th October (R. J. Fairbank, Father K. Wood *et al.*).

1988 Tayside Fishtown of Usan, trapped 23rd October, photo. (per M. S. Scott).

1990 Humberside Grimston, 19th October (A. & T. Isherwood).

1993 Scilly St Agnes, 3rd October (C. J. Timmins).

(Central and East Asia; winters Southeast Asia) A similar total to those of the

two previous years, but a decline from 1987-91, when nine to 24 were seen annually.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 132, 21)

Devon East Prawle, 8th October (P. M. Mayer, A. R. Trout). Dawlish Warren, 21st-29th November (I. Lakin, K. Rylands *et al.*). Broadsands, Torbay, 1st-5th December (P. A. Dennis, M. Langman *et al.*). Kenwith Nature Reserve, Bideford, 28th December to 1995, photo. (D. & S. Churchill, D. Curtis, A. M. Jewels *et al.*) (plate 180, on page 540).

Dorset Easton, Portland, 5th November (P. M. Harris *et al.*). Verne Common, 26th November (C. E. Richards).

Humberside Flamborough Head, 22nd-25th October (D. Hall, D. M. Walters, J. Williams *et al.*). Grimston, 5th-6th November (A. & T. Isherwood *et al.*).

Lancashire Heysham, trapped 4th November, photo. (T. Wilmer *et al.*).

Norfolk Holkham, 17th-20th October (M. E. S. Rooney *et al.*). Waxham, 23rd October (P. J. Heath *et al.*). Wells, 24th October, photo. (A. I. Bloomfield, J. R. McCallum). Mundesley, 3rd November (M. Fiszer). Great Yarmouth, 6th November (P. R. Allard, J. & K. Banford).

Northumberland Bamburgh, first-winter, trapped 22nd October, photo. (J. C. Day, M. K. & M. S. Hodgson). Newbiggin, 13th-14th November, photo. (J. W. Rutter, S. Sexton, J. G. Steele *et al.*).

Orkney Stronsay, 21st October (J. F. Holloway); 28th October (J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway).

Scilly St Agnes, 18th-22nd October, photo. (P. A. Fraser *et al.*).

Shetland Noness, 7th-8th November, trapped 7th, photo. (P. M. Ellis).

Western Isles Rangehead, South Uist, caught in building, 10th October (T. J. Dix).

1993 Humberside Flamborough Head, 2nd-8th November, trapped 2nd, photo. (P. A. Lassey, J. M. Pearson *et al.*).

(Central and Northeast to southern Asia; winters northern India and Southeast Asia) A record year, the previous highest annual total being 19 in 1990. Observers should take great care when distinguishing this from the previous species in their submissions to the Committee: separation is not so straightforward as was thought only a short while ago (see *Brit. Birds* 87: 436-441).

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (3, 124, 4)

Norfolk Sheringham, first-winter, 3rd-6th September, trapped 6th, photo. (K. B. Shepherd, M. Young-Powell *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 11th-13th May (S. D. Stansfield, H. Thurgate *et al.*). Copinsay, 25th May (T. Dean, Mrs J. Robinson-Dean).

Scilly St Mary's, 25th August to 7th September (R. L. Flood, V. A. Stratton, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

(Central, West and South Europe, Levant and Northwest Africa; winters northern Africa) An average showing. The last spring records were in 1988. Records of this species must be well documented, with attention to detail, in order to ensure acceptance by the Committee.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* (0, 17, 1)

Kent Dungeness, 3rd-4th April, photo. (R. J. Price, P. Short, D. Walker).

(Central and South Europe, Asia Minor and North Africa) Only three records have occurred outside Kent. Even in the hand, this species can be difficult to identify with absolute certainty.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 76, 18)

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, four, 4th November (Mrs S. M. Morrison *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, five: 4th-18th March (D. P. Boyle, R. J. Price *et al.*); two, 7th October (P. G. Akers, R. J. Price, C. Westlake); ♂, 28th, metal ring on left leg (P. G. Akers, R. J. Price); 1st

November (G. Hollomby, D. Walker).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 27th April (J. & Mrs J. Clarke *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Attenborough, adult, 23rd October (C. H. Mills).

Scilly Tresco, three juveniles, 20th August to 21st October (R. J. Hathway *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, ♂, 11th-23rd September (D. Fairhurst, A. R. J. Paine *et al.*).

Sussex, East Icklesham, ♂, trapped 18th October (T. Squire *et al.*).

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, two adults, 15th October (C. M. & Mrs B. James).

At sea Sea area Dogger, 54°01'N 02°01'E, juvenile, died in care, 23rd September, photo. (M. Higgleton).

1992 Cleveland Teesmouth, trapped 17th July (*Brit. Birds* 87: 560), to 18th (per G. Joynt).

1993 Cleveland Hargreaves Quarry, 8th-9th May, trapped 8th, photo. (C. Brown, G. Joynt *et al.*).

1993 Cornwall Land's End, three, 11th-13th October (*Brit. Birds* 87: 559), four, probably five, 12th (D. J. Holman *et al.*).

1993 Sussex, East Icklesham, trapped 25th October (D. Kelly, T. Squire, B. Stroub *et al.*).

(Western Europe to Manchuria; mainly resident, occasionally dispersive or eruptive) Another excellent year surpassing 1993, for which the additional records bring the total number of individuals to at least 13. The previous highest annual total was 15 in 1989. The third breeding attempt was reported in Norway (*Brit. Birds* 88: 42), but records here have been confined largely to the southern half of Britain.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 37, 2)

Greater London Richmond, ♂, long dead, 21st March, photo. (S. Ellison, J. Evans), now at Natural History Museum, Tring.

Shetland Fair Isle, ♀, 23rd-24th August, trapped 23rd, photo. (Dr R. Riddington, N. C. Ward *et al.*).

(South Asia to China; winters Northeast Africa) Two unusual but not unprecedented records (most are in October). Greater London is an unusual locality.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 114, 5)

Fife Elie, adult, probably ♂, 15th-20th September, photo. (D. S. Fotheringham, E. Ravenscroft *et al.*).

Kent Sandwich Bay, adult ♀, 2nd-28th August, trapped 18th, photo. (J. N. Darroch, J. Morton *et al.*).

Northumberland Hexham, 14th May (B. N. Rossiter).

Norfolk Sheringham, first-winter, 16th-17th September (D. P. Appleton, K. B. Shepherd *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, first-winter, 24th-27th September, photo. (M. J. McKee, C. Turner).

(South and East Europe and Southwest Asia; winters East and South Africa) An above-average total and the best year since 1982, when there were also five.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

L. e. pallidirostris (1, 6, 4)

Individuals showing the characters of the eastern race *L. e. pallidirostris* were recorded as follows:

Cumbria South Walney, first-winter, 2nd November, photo. (W. Makin, C. Raven, P. Zaltowski *et al.*).

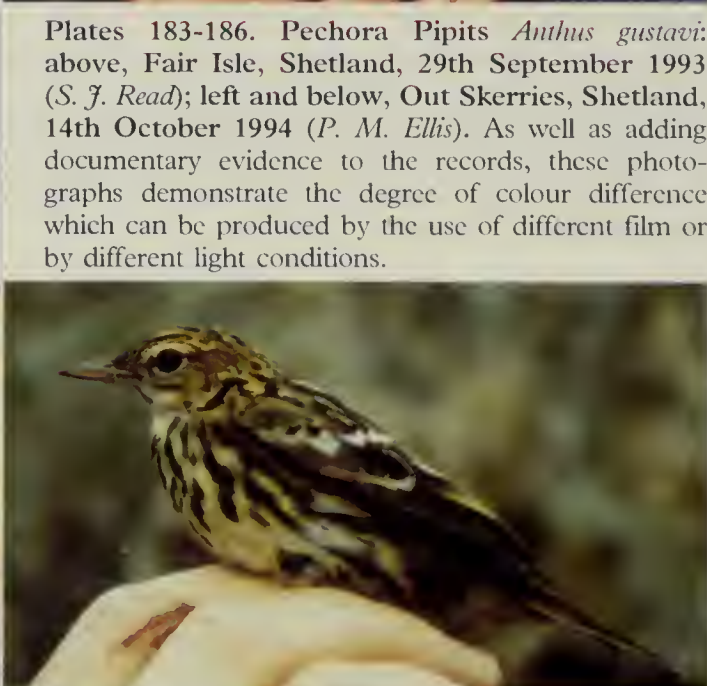
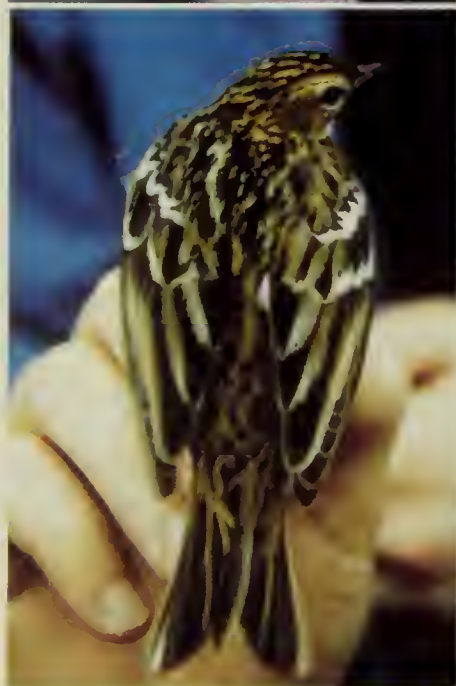
Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter ♂, 14th September to 16th October, trapped 5th, photo. (A. J. Leitch, S. D. Stansfield, Dr K. F. Woodbridge *et al.*) (plates 188 & 189). Papa Wcstray, 11th-26th November, photo. (Mrs A. Hourston, J. Rendall *et al.*) (plate 187, on page 552).



Plate 181. Female Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*, Shetland, 3rd September 1994 (J. F. Cooper) (see page 556)



Plate 182. First-winter Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, Norfolk, 24th September 1993 (K. B. Shepherd)



Plates 183-186. Pechora Pipits *Anthus gustavi*: above, Fair Isle, Shetland, 29th September 1993 (S. J. Read); left and below, Out Skerries, Shetland, 14th October 1994 (P. M. Ellis). As well as adding documentary evidence to the records, these photographs demonstrate the degree of colour difference which can be produced by the use of different film or by different light conditions.

Shetland Boddam, probably first-winter, 7th-10th November, photo. (H. R. Harrop, R. Reeves, I. S. Robertson *et al.*).

(Southern and Eastern Siberia; winters Pakistan, Iran, Arabia and East Africa) Only in 1992, when two were seen, had there previously been more than one recorded in a year. Now that the plumage features of this subspecies are becoming more widely known, will it become much more regularly recorded? An exemplary account by Dr J. F. Ryan of the one in Cornwall in April 1992 was published recently (*Brit. Birds* 88: 288-290).

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (101, 486, -)
1980 Devon Lundy, ♂, 6th-8th July, trapped 6th (*Brit. Birds* 74: 488), full dates 6th June to 1st August (per A. M. Jewels).
1990 Humberside Flamborough Head, 5th May (M. Newsome, P. J. Willoughby).

(West, Central and South Europe, Southwest Asia and North Africa; winters North and West Africa) This species is no longer considered by the Committee. For the benefit of county and regional records committees, Peter Clement recently reviewed the identification pitfalls and assessment problems relating to this species (*Brit. Birds* 88: 291-295).

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 240, 26)
Cornwall Sennen, 19th June; presumed same, Porthgwarra, 20th (J. F. Ryan *et al.*). Langore, near Launceston, first-winter, 16th October to 6th December, photo. (L. Lock, Rev. & Mrs D. S. Manders *et al.*).
Devon Lundy, juvenile, 3rd-4th October (G. K. Gordon *et al.*).
Dorset West Bexington, 10th June (D. J. Chown, I. McLean *et al.*) (fig. 8, on page 547).
Portland, juvenile, 23rd-28th September (W. Barrett, A. Plumb *et al.*).

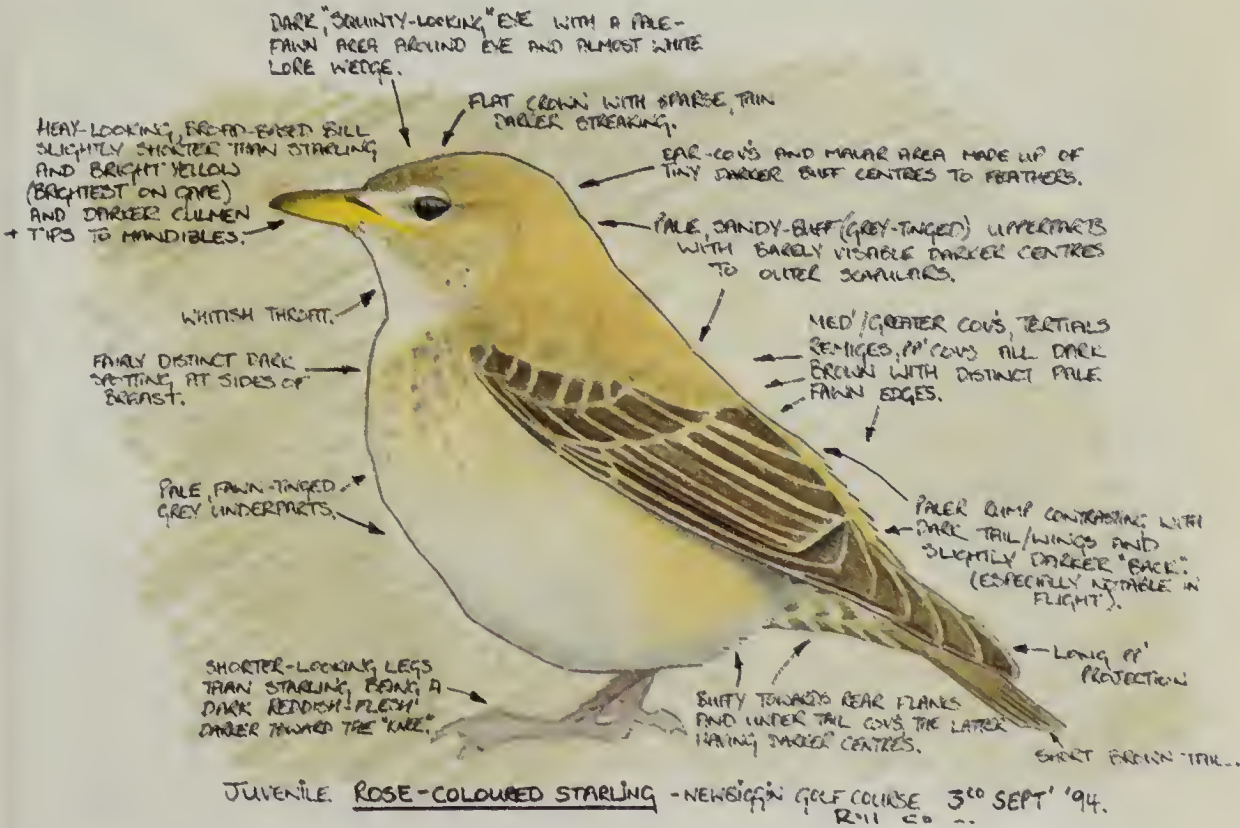


Fig. 6. Juvenile Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*, Northumberland, 3rd September 1994 (Bill Simpson)

Grampian Fraserburgh, 15th July, photo. (G. & Mrs L. Noble).

Greater London Walthamstow, 22nd June (D. Mitchell).

Humberside Spurn, 4th June (D. R. Middleton, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

Kent Aylesford, first-year, at least 22nd March to 21st April, photo. (C. & Z. V. R. Hills, D. Morgan).

Norfolk Sea Palling, 9th June, photo. (P. G. Millsted *et al.*).

Northumberland Newbiggin, juvenile, 3rd September, photo. (K. Scattergood, W. Simpson) (fig. 6, on page 545).

Orkney Eday, adult, 6th August (P. R. Catchpole, M. G. Cockram).

Powys Rhayader, juvenile, 22nd-27th September (M. F. Peers, M. Shrubb *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes and Gugh, juvenile, 18th-22nd October (E. S. Clare *et al.*, per W. H. Wagstaff); same, St Mary's, 23rd October to 2nd December (D. J. Holman *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, adult, 3rd-5th August (W. Watt *et al.*). Troswick, adult, 11th August, photo. (M. Heubeck *et al.*). Fair Isle, juvenile, 22nd September to at least 3rd November, trapped 2nd October (C. J. Orsman, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

Somerset Upper Holway, 29th June to 3rd July, two, possibly three, 29th (N. French, B. D. Gibbs *et al.*).

Strathclyde Irvine, 6th-14th May, photo. (W. & Mrs A. Smith *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 11th-15th June, photo. (D. & J. F. Cooper) (plates 191 & 192, on page 553).

Sussex, West Sidlesham, adult, 18th September (A. D. Whitcombe *et al.*).

Tayside Garrybank, adult, 1st-6th August, photo. (R. J. Young). Meigle, adult, 4th-21st August (F. Brown, T. & Mrs M. Green, M. S. Scott *et al.*).

1991 Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 10th-27th October, photo. (D. J. D. Hickman *et al.*).

1992 Devon Torcross, juvenile, 25th-27th September (L. Lock *et al.*).

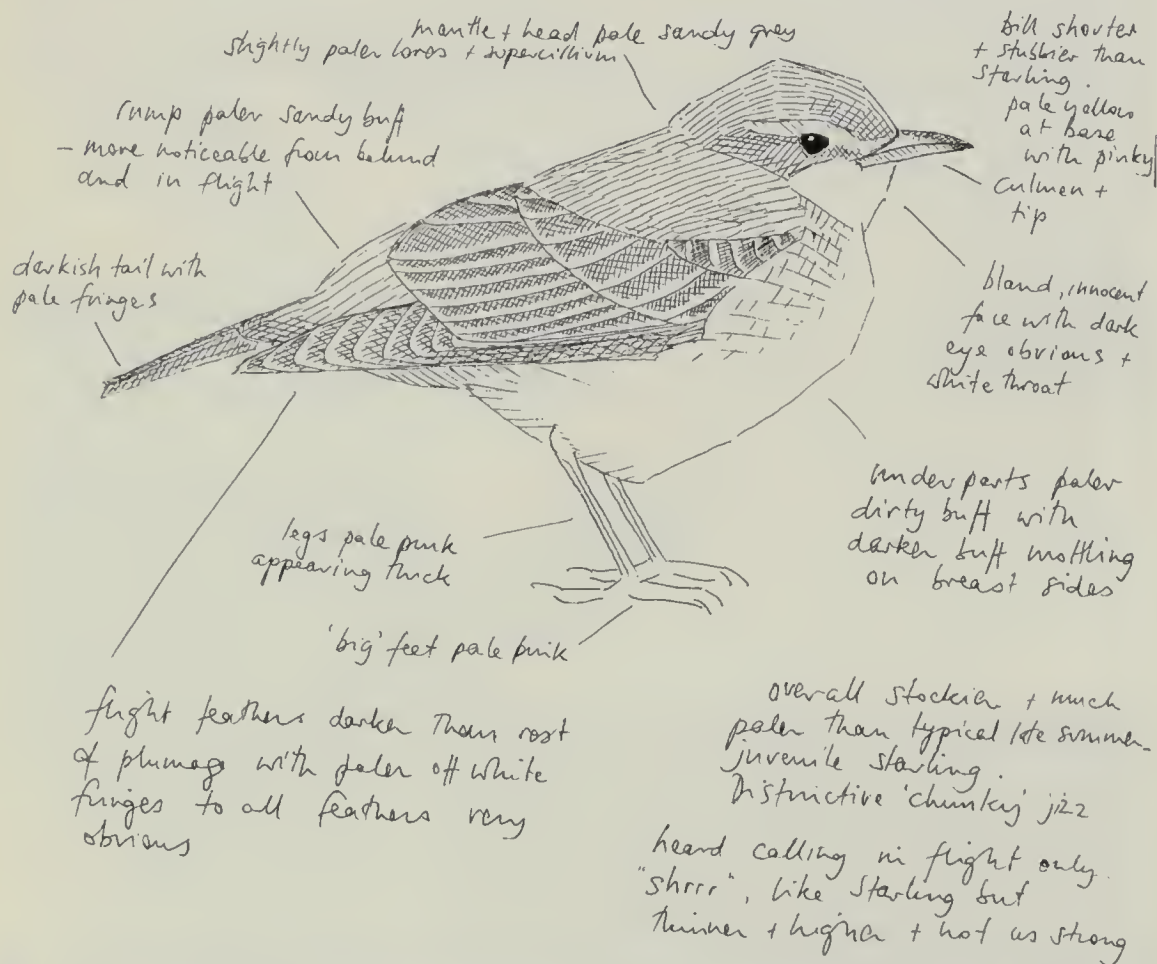


Fig. 7. Juvenile Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*, Nanjizal, Cornwall, 19th October 1993 (Nik Hando)

1993 Cornwall Nanjizal, juvenile, 19th October (N. Hando) (fig. 7); presumed same as St Leven, 19th (*Brit. Birds* 87: 560).

1993 Scilly St Agnes, juvenile, 13th October (D. J. Holman); present 22nd September to 25th November (per W. H. Wagstaff).

IRELAND

Antrim Antrim, 24th July to 3rd August.

Cork Cape Clear Island, juvenile, 25th September to 19th October.

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia; winters India) By far the largest annual total, with only 17 in 1983 and 16 in 1991 even coming close. The multiple record in Somerset is the first such occurrence of adults since the Committee came into existence. These records follow huge influxes in Bulgaria, including a roost of 3,000 on 2nd June (*Brit. Birds* 88: 43), and Hungary, where 550-600 pairs nested (*Brit. Birds* 88: 278). Whilst some observers may find juveniles of this species dull and uninteresting, the Committee wishes that more reporters would emulate the fine examples set by Bill Simpson and Nik Hando (figs. 6 & 7).



Fig. 8. Adult Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*, West Bexington, Dorset, 10th June 1994 (D. J. Chown)

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 77, 1)

1991 Cleveland North Gare, 12th October (*Brit. Birds* 86: 525), to 13th (per G. Joynt).

IRELAND

Cork Mizen Head, 8th to 10th October.

(North America; winters Cuba and northern South America) None in Britain and just this one in Ireland, in a poor year here for North American passerines.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 263, 10)

Grampian Cruden Bay, 13th November (J. Oates, Dr I. M. Phillips *et al.*).

Norfolk Brancaster, 17th-18th April (B. Robson, R. Q. Skeen, D. Thurlow *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, two first-winters, 9th-22nd November, both trapped 11th, one to 24th, retrapped 23rd, photo. (S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).

Shetland Baltasound, Unst, 16th January (H. J. Burgess, M. G. Pennington, I. Spence). Quendale, 27th-28th October (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey, H. R. Harrop). Out Skerries, 28th October (P. M. Ellis). Skaw, Unst, 2nd November (H. R. Harrop).

Tayside Easthaven, 22nd October (M. S. Scott).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 16th October (J. W. Cooper, R. F. Dickens, S. Gwillian *et al.*).

1993 Shetland Fair Isle, 20th-23rd May, trapped 21st (P. A. Jenks, A. J. Leitch, T. Lumsden).

(Circumpolar Arctic; spreads erratically south in winter) A similar total to those of the previous two years and a decline from the large influxes of 29 in 1990 and 63 in 1991. The Out Skerries individual made its landfall on the observer.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (40, 77, 0)

1990 Norfolk Sandringham Warren, ♂, 29th September (*Brit. Birds* 86: 526), correct dates 30th September to at least 6th October, possibly to 14th (D. J. Holman, J. A. Rowlands *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 84: plate 92); not same as juvenile ♂, 29th-30th, not accepted (*Brit. Birds* 87: 570).

1991 Clwyd Near Llanfihangel Glyn Myrfyr, ♂, 3rd-26th March, photo. (M. Davies, M. G. Neal *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe, North-central Asia, northern North America and Hispaniola; winters south and west of breeding range) The problem of distinguishing individuals of this species from Common Crossbills *L. curvirostra* with exceptionally broad whitish wing-bars is still very real.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (10, 470, 1)

Shetland Kergord, first-winter ♀, 19th-20th October, photo. (P. M. Ellis, D. Suddaby *et al.*).

1991 Northumberland Harwood Forest, two ♀♀, 17th March (J. Hallowell, A. D. McLevy).

(Scandinavia and West Russia; periodically spreads south and west in winter) The first record after two blank years and in stark contrast to the large influxes of 208 in 1990 and 51 in 1991. Care must be taken in describing the structure of the bill of this species in sufficient detail to eliminate both large-billed Common Crossbills *L. curvirostra* and Scottish Crossbill *L. scotica*.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* (1, 17, 2)

Avon Eastville Park, Bristol, 16th-17th November, photo. (R. M. Andrews, R. Erickson-Hull, J. P. Martin, A. J. Musgrove *et al.*) (fig. 10, on page 550).

Dyfed Ramsey Island, 31st October to 4th November, photo. (K. Dobbs, D. Woodhead *et al.*) (plate 194, on page 553; fig. 9, opposite).

(Northern and Central America; winters south to Panama) There have now been records in two successive years after a gap of five years since the previous record in 1987.

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* (0, 31, 1)

Sussex, East Bewl Water, 10th-20th December, photo. (M. Scott-Ham *et al.*) (plate 193, on page 553).

(North America; winters northern South America) Another strange winter record of an American wood-warbler. This follows Black-and-white Warblers *Mniotilta varia* in Devon on 3rd March 1978 and in Norfolk during 3rd-15th December 1985; Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera* in Kent during 24th January to 10th April 1989; Yellow-rumped Warbler *D. coronata* in Devon during 4th January to 10th February 1955; Ovenbirds *Seiurus aurocapillus* in Lancashire (wing only) on 4th January 1969, and in Co. Mayo (freshly dead) on 8th December 1977; and Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* in Kent during 6th January to 23rd April 1989.

Song Sparrow *Zonotrichia melodia* (0, 6, 1)

Merseyside Seaforth, 15th-17th October, photo. (A. Pryce, T. Vaughan *et al.*).

(North America; winters mainly within the USA) The first since 1989 and the first in autumn. Its proximity to dockyards was perhaps no coincidence.

Myrtle (Yellow Rumped) Warbler *Dendroica coronata* Ramsey Island, Pembrokeshire - 31st October - 4th November 94.



D. Woodhead

Fig. 9. Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*, Dyfed, October-November 1994 (D. Woodhead)

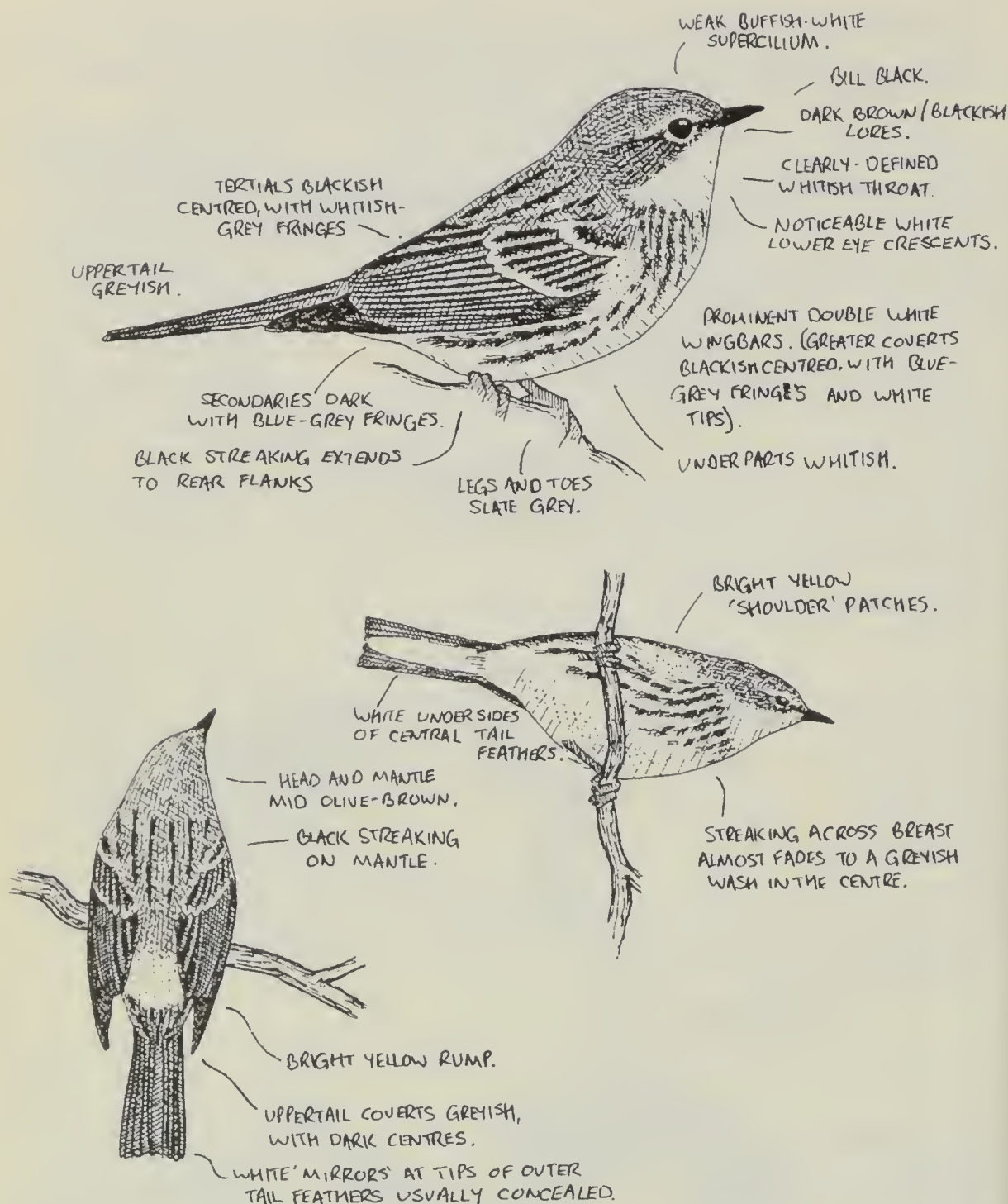


Fig. 10. Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*, Avon, 17th November 1994 (R. M. Andrews)

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* (0, 0, 0)

(Eastern Central Asia from the Altai Mountains east to Japan; winters eastern Nepal to southern China) The identification of the first-winter male which stayed at Pennington Flash, Greater Manchester, from 8th March (when it was trapped) until 24th April (plate 128) is not in dispute. Its probable origin is, however, still under active investigation by the BOU Records Committee, and is the subject of considerable debate amongst the birding fraternity, especially the hundreds who travelled to see the bird. The patterns of occurrences of rare passerines in Britain

& Ireland in relation to vagrancy versus escape from captivity were recently explored by Dr David Parkin and Dr Alan Knox (*Brit. Birds* 87: 585-592). Whatever its origin, and its eventual categorisation, this well-watched individual—potentially the first wild one for Britain & Ireland—gave pleasure to many observers.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (2, 22, 5)

Orkney Sanday, ♂, 22nd October (K. Fairclough, E. R. Meek). North Ronaldsay, ♂, 28th October (P. J. Donnelly).

Shetland Out Skerries, first-winter ♀, 22nd-23rd October (P. M. Ellis, D. Suddaby, E. Tait). Sumburgh, ♂, 23rd October (J. Clifton, H. R. Harrop, A. McCall *et al.*). Fair Isle, ♂, probably first-winter, 7th November (M. A. Newall, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

1990 Tyne & Wear Big Waters Nature Reserve, ♀, about 18th February to 16th March, photo. (C. Bradshaw, A. Hutt, K. W. Regan *et al.*).

1991 Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♀, 12th-13th October; first-winter ♀, 1st-5th November (M. Gray *et al.*).

(Urals, across Asia to Sakhalin; winters Middle East, India and China) The best year ever, the previous best being the four in 1987 and the three in 1988. The very real problems of eliminating the possibility of exceptionally pale Yellowhammers *E. citrinella* or, even more likely, Pine Bunting × Yellowhammer hybrids meant that a great deal of research and deliberation was necessary before the additional 1990 and 1991 records could be accepted. A great deal of useful information on the finer points of the identification of this species has, however, now come to light, particularly the need to check carefully the colour of the fringes to the outer webs of the primaries, especially on females. Interestingly, 1994 saw the first Polish record, involving a male which hybridised with a female Yellowhammer (*Brit. Birds* 88: 44). Autumn vagrants were also reported in Finland (one) and the Netherlands (four to six individuals) (*Brit. Birds* 88: 279).

Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys* (0, 3, 1)

Scilly St Agnes, 19th-22nd October, photo. (J. Lowes, M. Oksien, S. L. Rivers, J. F. Wright *et al.*) (plate 190, on page 552).

(Northeast Asia and East China; winters Southeast China) The age and sex of this bird remain uncertain, but it was probably first-winter. The first for Scilly. Previous records were of singles in Norfolk on 19th October 1975, Shetland on 12th-23rd October 1980 and Orkney on 22nd-23rd September 1992.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (34, 278, 15)

Cambridgeshire Fowlmere, sex uncertain, 26th January to 10th March, photo. (S. L. Cooper *et al.*).

Cleveland Locke Park, Redcar, 25th September, photo. (M. R. K. Askew *et al.*).

Devon Lundy, 12th October (A. M. Jewels).

Dyfed Skokholm, sex uncertain, 23rd May (J. Gale, Miss P. A. Wild).

Lincolnshire North Coates, ♂, 23rd-24th May (D. Bradbeer *et al.*).

Norfolk Salthouse, sex uncertain, 22nd-23rd May, photo. (J. V. Bhalerao *et al.*).

Northumberland Farne Islands, ♀, 21st-23rd May (A. Baxter *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, 11th-14th October, photo. (Mr & Mrs T. Atkinson, M. P. Edgecombe, S. Howard *et al.*).

Shetland Boddam, ♂, 14th May (E. J., J. & P. McOwat). Fair Isle, ♂, 15th May (J. Reid, N. Ward *et al.*); ♂, 26th-28th May (Dr R. Riddington, N. Ward *et al.*); first-winter, probably ♀, trapped 17th October (Dr R. Riddington, N. Ward *et al.*). Loch of Spiggie, 28th September (C. Barton, I. Gordon, I. A. Roberts).

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, sex uncertain, 17th May (T. J. Dix, J. Vaughan).



Plates 187-189. Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* of eastern race *pallidirostris*: above, Papa Westray, Orkney, November 1994 (Anne Hourston); below and right, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, October 1994 (Steven Stansfield)



Plate 190. Below, Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*, Scilly, October 1994 (Rob Wilson)





Plates 191 & 192. Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*, East Sussex, 14th June 1994 (J. F. Cooper)



Plate 193. Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*, East Sussex, 17th December 1994 (Dave Stewart/Birding Images)

Plate 194. Below, Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*, Dyfed, November 1994 (Alan Tate)



Yorkshire, North Filey, 25th September (J. Sanderson, J. M. Turton).

1990 Cleveland South Gare, ♂, 26th April (*Brit. Birds* 84: 501), was 22nd April.

1993 Cleveland South Gare, 16th-19th September (*Brit. Birds* 87: 563), to at least 22nd (per G. Joynt).

1993 Devon Lundy, 20th October (G. K. Gordon).

1993 Greater London Beddington Sewage-farm, ♀, 9th February to 13th March, photo. (A. Greensmith, J. S. Walsh *et al.*).

1993 Humberside Beacon Ponds, Easington, ♂, 11th May (A. L. Dawson *et al.*).

1993 Norfolk Holkham Meals, 18th May (*Brit. Birds* 87: 564), was 18th September.

1993 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 29th October (M. Gray).

1993 Scilly St Mary's, 9th-12th October (P. Higson *et al.*).

IRELAND

1993 Cork Old Head of Kinsale, adult ♂, 9th October.

(Northeast Europe across to North Asia; winters Turkestan to China and Japan) An average total, but a second winter record, in Cambridgeshire, follows the first, in Greater London in 1993. The one in Co. Cork came 34 years to the day after Ireland's first ever. The additional 1993 records bring the total number of individuals for that record year to a remarkable 50.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (93, 527, -)

1992 Humberside Flamborough Head, 4th October (R. Hearn, M. Thomas *et al.*).

1993 Greater London See 1993 Surrey below.

1993 Merseyside Meols, 12th October (S. R. Davidson).

1993 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 13th September (M. Gray *et al.*); first-winter, trapped 29th October (A. D. Mitchell *et al.*). Stronsay, 30th October to at least 31st December (*Brit. Birds* 87: 564), to 10th February 1994.

1993 Shetland Whalsay, 3rd October (J. L. Irvine).

1993 Surrey Beddington Sewage-farm (*Brit. Birds* 87: 565), locality is in Greater London.

(Northeast Europe and North Asia; winters Turkestan to India and Southeast Asia) The additional records bring the 1993 total to 45. This species is no longer considered by the Committee.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 157, 5)

Merseyside Hilbre, ♀ or first-winter, 7th September (G. Broad, S. Brown *et al.*).

Shetland Skaw, Unst, ♀ or first-winter, 27th-28th August, photo. (Dr C. F. Mackenzie *et al.*).

Fair Isle, ♀ or first-winter, 9th September (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); ♀ or first-winter, 18th (J. Reid *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey, ♀ or first-winter, 18th September (R. E. Harbird, D. J. Scanlan *et al.*).

1993 Suffolk Landguard, ♀ or first-winter, 14th September (*Brit. Birds* 87: 565), report related to 4th September.

(Northeast Europe across Northern Asia; winters India and Southeast Asia) An average total for recent years. This species is still most often encountered in Shetland, and the Merseyside record is especially unusual. The fourth French record this century was also reported, on 24th-27th October (*Brit. Birds* 88: 280).

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (9, 108, 3)

Devon Starcross, ♂, 8th June (G. & Mrs P. Wills).

Highland Durness, ♂, 30th July (M. Fitch). Brora, ♂, 1st-4th October, photo. (A. R. & H. T. Mainwood, A. Vittery *et al.*).

1993 Devon Lundy, ♂, 24th May to 4th June (A. M. Jewels, D. Parker *et al.*).

1993 Gwynedd Cmllyn Bay, Anglesey, ♂, 12th June (R. K. Treeby, D. Wright *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia; winters India) A return to more-typical numbers after 13 in 1992 and 12 in 1993.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* (0, 23, 0)

1991 **Humberside** Bridlington, first-winter ♂, 5th-6th November, photo. (I. & Mrs J. Atha, T. D. Charlton *et al.*).

(North America; winters Central America to Peru) The elderly owners of the small suburban garden were understandably reluctant to allow access to more than a handful of local birders. This record was later than most, almost all of which have been in October. The only previous record in Eastern Britain was in Essex during 20th December 1975 to 4th January 1976.

Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see *Ibis* 136: 253)**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber*

P. r. roseus (–, 3, 1)

Grampian Ythan Estuary, adult, 31st May to 28th June, photo. (S. M. D. Alexander, P. Shepherd *et al.*).

1988 **Shetland** Pool of Virkie, adult, 27th-31st May, photo. (P. V. Harvey, Mrs L. Marshall *et al.*).

1990 **Norfolk** Breydon, immature, 6th October, photo. (P. R. Allard, J. Oates *et al.*).

1992 **Yorkshire**, North Bolton-on-Swale, adult, intermittently 4th-17th January (B. Miller, N. Morgan).

(Old World race *P. r. roseus* breeds Mediterranean area, Africa eastward to India) Widely kept in captivity and some captive-bred individuals may wander. The Committee has not yet received confirmation that the Grampian bird was also seen in Lothian and Dumfries & Galloway, and the widely publicised North Kent and Essex individual has yet to be fully processed.

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata* (0, 10, 1)

Essex Old Hall Marshes, 16th January to at least 11th April (C. McClure, S. D. Wood *et al.*).

(Eastern Siberia; winters North India, Japan, Korea) The Committee would welcome identification details of currently undocumented records at the Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire, in 1971 and at Grafham Water, Cambridgeshire, in 1976.

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* (0, 3, 1)

Essex Old Hall Marshes, ♂, 28th May to 12th June (D. Rhymes, C. Shields, S. D. Wood *et al.*).

(Central and eastern Siberia; winters Southeastern China, Southern Japan) This species was transferred from Category A to Category D in 1993 (*Ibis* 135: 495).

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* (0, 5, 2)

Glamorgan, Mid Kenfig Pool, 7th June, photo. (S. J. Moon, G. H. Thomson, H. A. Williams).

Somerset Steart, 23rd June (J. R. Diamond, B. D. Gibbs).

1990 **Leicestershire** Rutland Water, 16th-20th June (A. H. J. Harrop *et al.*).

1990 **Warwickshire** Kingsbury Water Park, 13th July to at least 19th August (J. P. Martin *et al.*), presumed same as Leicestershire.

1990 **Yorkshire**, South Potteric Carr, 14th September (*Brit. Birds* 87: 567), to 27th October, possibly same as Warwickshire.

1991 **Greater London** Barn Elms Reservoirs, 3rd-30th August (per C. Lamsdell).

(Mediterranean region of Europe, North Africa and Middle East; winters locally or south to Central and West Africa) It is just possible that the current Glamorgan and Somerset records related to the same individual.

Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila* (0, 4, 1)

Shetland Out Skerries, ♀, 2nd-5th September, trapped 3rd, photo. (J. F. & Mrs D. R. Cooper, J. D. Okill *et al.*) (plates 181, on page 544, & 196, below).

1974 Shetland Foula, 9th-13th June (*Brit. Birds* 70: 444) was 9th-13th July (*Ibis* 134: 213).

(Southern Siberia; winters Southeast Asia, Burma). All four previous records have been in June/July, but a September occurrence is perhaps a better candidate for genuine vagrancy.



Plate 195. First-winter male Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, Cleveland, 6th November 1994 (C. Sharp)



Plate 196. Female Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*, Shetland, 3rd September 1994 (J. F. Cooper)

Appendix 2. List of records not accepted

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include (a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) without circulation, after discussion with the Honorary Secretary; (b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; (c) those mentioned in 'The ornithological year' or 'Recent reports' in this journal if full details were unobtainable; or (d) certain escapes.

In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced, on the evidence before us, that the identification was fully established; in only a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

1994 White-billed Diver Loch Barraglom, Western Isles, 28th January. **Little Shearwater** St Catherine's Point, Isle of Wight, 22nd May; Portland, Dorset, 31st July; Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 4th August; Cemlyn Bay, Gwynedd, two, 11th September; Hinkley Point, Somerset, 18th September; Brora, Highland, 21st October. **Little Bittern** New Hythe, Kent, 24th May; Westhay Moor, Somerset, 27th May. **Night Heron** Loch of Strathbeg, Grampian, 3rd May; Kennack Sands, Cornwall, 30th May. **Squaeco Heron** Plymouth, Devon, 4th May. **Great White Egret** Hamford Water, Essex, 8th May; Stodmarsh, Kent, 8th May; Winterton, Norfolk, 15th May; Linford, Buckinghamshire, 3rd August; Butley Creek, Suffolk, two, 6th August; Barnstaple, Devon, 6th November. **Black Stork** Chudleigh Knighton, Devon, 2nd February; Chilham, Kent, 22nd June; Stanwell, Greater London, 30th June. **American Wigeon** St Mary's, Scilly, 20th October. **King Eider** North Berwick, Lothian, 1st April; Mull, Strathclyde, 2nd

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May. **Black Kite** Cleeve Hill, Gloucestershire, 29th April; Pevensey Levels, East Sussex, 29th April; Rostherne Mere, Cheshire, 30th April; Buntingford, Hertfordshire, 30th April; Pilling, Lancashire, 1st May; Benfleet, Essex, 10th May; Beachy Head, East Sussex, 10th May; Dungeness, Kent, 12th May; Galmpton, Devon, 13th May; Lancing, West Sussex, 13th May; near Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, 28th May; Skomer, Dyfed, 29th May; St Margaret's, Kent, 29th May; Epping, Essex, 6th June; Halstead, Kent, 6th June; Mackerye End, Hertfordshire, 9th June; Shoeburyness, Essex, 11th June; Sheppey, Kent, 12th June; Great Haldon Forest, Devon, 23rd June; Topsham, Devon, 23rd June; Haytor, Devon, 19th, 25th October. **Red-footed Falcon** St Albans, Hertfordshire, 3rd May; Layer-de-la-Haye, Essex, 9th May; Howden, Humberside, 10th May; Skelmersdale, Lancashire, 14th May; Filey, North Yorkshire, 14th May; Trowell, Nottinghamshire, 29th May; Godshill, Isle of Wight, 31st May; Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex, 3rd July; Shrewton, Wiltshire, 14th September; Cruden Bay, Grampian, 5th November. **Little Crake** Shell Carrington Nature Reserve, Greater Manchester, 20th-23rd April; Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire, 30th June; Tresco, Scilly, 9th October. **Black-winged Pratincole** Thursley Common, Surrey, 29th April. **Pratincole** Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire, 29th August. **Killdeer Plover** Isle of Lewis, Western Isles, 27th March. **Pacific Golden Plover** Horsehow Point, Lincolnshire, 14th July. **Sociable Lapwing** Brockhampton, Hampshire, 27th July. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Vaul Bay, Tiree, Strathclyde, 7th May. **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** St Mary's, Scilly, 8th October. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Druridge Pools, Northumberland, 28th July. **Great Snipe** Sanday, Orkney, 13th October. **Upland Sandpiper** Bowness-on-Solway, Cumbria, 11th September. **Marsh Sandpiper** Timber Mill Creek, Essex, 5th July; Cley, Norfolk, 16th July; Faversham, Kent, 5th September. **Lesser Yellowlegs** Frampton-on-Severn, Gloucestershire, 10th September. **Terek Sandpiper** Coatham Marsh, Cleveland, 15th September. **Franklin's Gull** Fraserburgh, Grampian, 6th January; Mid Foulshaw, Cumbria, 16th January; Bainton Green, Cambridgeshire, 10th May; Stanwick, Northamptonshire, 10th May. **Bonaparte's Gull** Draycote Water, Warwickshire, 12th March; Plym Estuary, Devon, 20th March; Seaforth, Merseyside, 26th March; Titchwell, Norfolk, 9th May; Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 18th September. **Ross's Gull** Tayport, Fife, 23rd February; Marsden, Tyne & Wear, 18th July. **Ivory Gull** Gouthwaite Reservoir, North Yorkshire, 16th March. **Gull-billed Tern** Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 27th August; Fiddler's Ferry, Cheshire, 2nd October. **Whiskered Tern** Wakering, Essex, 8th May; St Mary's, Scilly, two, 11th May; Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir, West Glamorgan, 11th September; Colne Point, Essex, 14th September. **White-winged Black Tern** Beckton, Greater London, 15th September; Eye Brook Reservoir, Leicestershire, 21st September. **Great Spotted Cuckoo** Winchester, Hampshire, 15th July. **Snowy Owl** near Fettercairn, Grampian, 12th July. **Tengmalm's Owl** Thompson, Norfolk, 14th August. **Chimney Swift** Aldeburgh, Suffolk, 5th November. **Alpine Swift** Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, 25th July; Frampton-on-Severn, Gloucestershire, 11th August. **European Roller** Aldeburgh, Suffolk, 28th May. **Calandra Lark** Dungeness, Kent, 6th March. **Red-rumped Swallow** Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex, 28th May; Wareham, Dorset, 6th November. **Olive-backed Pipit** Pennington Flash, Greater Manchester, 10th October. **Pechora Pipit** Strand, Shetland, 10th October; Minsmere, Suffolk, 5th November. **Thrush Nightingale** Yeo Estuary, Avon, 2nd September. **'Siberian' Common Stonechat** Red Rocks, Merseyside, 20th March. **Black-eared Wheatear** Yaverland, Isle of Wight, two, 17th September; Benacre, Suffolk, 27th September. **Desert Wheatear** Arun Valley, West Sussex, 23rd-30th April. **White's Thrush** Okehampton, Devon, 24th-25th November. **Siberian Thrush** Thorpe-le-Soken, Essex, 4th October. **American Robin** Walton-le-Dale, Lancashire, mid November; Bembridge, Isle of Wight, 5th December. **Greenish Warbler** Farndale, North Yorkshire, 18th-25th May; Felixstowe, Suffolk, 22nd May. **Arctic Warbler** Walberswick, Suffolk, 5th September; Moreton, Merseyside, 13th September. **Radde's Warbler** Worthing, West Sussex, 5th October. **Bonelli's Warbler** St Mary's, Scilly, 15th October. **Nutcracker** Finchley, Greater London, 30th September. **Rosy Starling** St Martin's, Scilly, 20th July; Bolt Head, Devon, 15th August; Kilnsea, Humberside, 24th September. **Hooded Warbler** St Mary's, Scilly, 24th August. **Black-faced Bunting** Minsmere, Suffolk, 30th March. **Rustic Bunting** Felixstowe, Suffolk, 25th October. **Black-headed Bunting** Lay Hill, Somerset, 20th August.

1993 Little Shearwater North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 1st November. **Night Heron** Cofton, Devon, 28th June. **Black Stork** Bankfoot, Tayside, 27th August. **Bufflehead** Hemingford Grey,

Cambridgeshire, 28th December. **Black Kite** Rew Down, Isle of Wight, 29th April; Upton Snodbury, Hereford & Worcester, 2nd June; Ramsay Island, Dyfed, 22nd June; Minsmere, Suffolk, two, 16th September. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Dawlish Warren, Devon, 14th October. **Great Snipe** Minsmere, Suffolk, 13th September; Shoeburyness, Essex, 2nd-4th November; Findhorn Bay, Grampian, 27th November. **Laughing Gull** Plymouth, Devon, 2nd March; Slapton Sands, Devon, 23rd October. **Bonaparte's Gull** Marton Mere, Lancashire, 27th April. **Gull-billed Tern** Point of Air, Clwyd, 5th June; Point Lynas, Gwynedd, 22nd June. **Forster's Tern** Point of Air, Clwyd, 5th August. **Alpine Swift** Start Point, Devon, 7th April. **Red-throated Pipit** Lympstone, Devon, 18th October. **Yellow Wagtail** *simillima* Aust, Avon, 16th December to January 1994. **Black-eared Wheatear** St Agnes, Scilly, 2nd September; Salhouse, Norfolk, 4th September. **Dark-throated Thrush** Tresco, Scilly, 16th October. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Dungeness, Kent, 2nd November. **Marmora's Warbler** Kynance, Cornwall, 28th August. **Greenish Warbler** Wormiston, Fife, 13th-14th May. **Short-toed Treecreeper** Dungeness, Kent, 31st August to 19th September, 1st-11th December. **Rosy Starling** Theberton, Suffolk, 29th August; Stranraer, Dumfries & Galloway, 25th September; Totnes, Devon, 12th November. **1992** **Bulwer's Petrel** Point of Air, Clwyd, 11th September. **Gull-billed Tern** Holkham, Norfolk, 20th September. **Black-eared Wheatear** Folkestone, Kent, 1st October. **Bonelli's Warbler** Minsmere, Suffolk, 13th October.

1991 **Booted Eagle** North Foreland, Kent, 14th August. **Pacific Golden Plover** Vidlin, Shetland, 1st October. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Fareham, Hampshire, 12th-16th February. **'Siberian' Common Stonechat** Porthgwarra, Cornwall, two, 8th April. **Booted Warbler** Stronsay, Orkney, 23rd-27th August. **Great Grey Shrike** *meridionalis* Carlton Colville, Suffolk, 18th May to 8th July. **Nutcracker** Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, 9th November. **Parrot Crossbill** Brandon, Suffolk, 29th March.

1990 **Greater Flamingo** *roseus* Walberswick, Suffolk, four, 26th November. **White-tailed Eagle** Broomfleet Ponds, Humberside, 3rd February. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Broomfleet Ponds, Humberside, 17th-21st September. **European Bee-eater** Battle, East Sussex, 18th June.

1989 **Common Scoter** *americana* Pennington, Hampshire, 22nd July. **Red-footed Falcon** Broomfleet Ponds, Humberside, 20th June. **White-checked Tern** Dungeness, Kent, 13th May, St Margaret's, Kent, 13th May. **Lesser Grey Shrike** Bishop Monkton, North Yorkshire, 1st November.

1988 **Little Bunting** Farne Islands, Northumberland, 13th November.

1984 **'Siberian' Common Stonechat** Gulval, Cornwall, two, 2nd April. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Holkham Meads, Norfolk, 28th-29th May.

1981 **Brown Pelican** *Pelecanus occidentalis* Skomer, Dyfed, 11th April.

1979 **'Siberian' Common Stonechat** Landguard, Suffolk, 17th April; Selsey Bill, West Sussex, 28th April; Red Rocks, Merseyside, 26th May.

Appendix 3. List of records not accepted but identification proved

This list provides a permanent record of those occurrences which, usually on the grounds of likely escape from captivity, find no place in any category, but which may, at some future date, merit further consideration. It does not include (a) any record of a species for which natural vagrancy is wholly unlikely or (b) those records of presumed escapes already mentioned in the main text of this or earlier Reports. The decisions have been taken by this Committee unless otherwise shown.

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii* South West Mosses, Lancashire, 5th December 1970 to 17th January 1971; presumed same, 8th December 1971 to 9th January 1972, 30th November 1972 to January 1973, late December 1973 to 12th January 1974. **Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo* The Fleet, Dorset, at least 29th September 1975; Spurn, Humberside, 13th-23rd September 1993, presumed same, Grafham Water, Cambridgeshire, 25th, Stewartby, Bedfordshire, 2nd October, localities in Essex, 5th-10th. **Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* Scunthorpe, Humberside, 21st October 1988; Gullane, Lothian, 24th April 1988; Brighstone, Isle of Wight, 24th-25th February 1993, possibly since November 1992. **Verditer Flycatcher** *Muscicapa thalassina* Crail, Fife, 3rd-4th October 1993. **White-checked Starling** *Sturnus cineraceus* Buckie, Grampian, end January to 12th April 1994. **Long-tailed Rosefinch** *Uragus sibiricus* Minsmere, Suffolk, 21st April 1994.



MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS



Plate 197. Mystery photograph 195. Identify the species. Answer on pages 561-564.



LOOKING BACK

One hundred and fifty years ago: 'A List of the Migratory Birds of Provence . . . Great Grey Shrike, *Lanius excubitor*, and *Lanius meridionalis*, arrive in March and April, leave in September. These two species are rare.

'Hedge Accentor, *Accentor modularis*. Seen in winter. Contrary to the opinion of ornithologists, sportsmen assure me that these birds cross the sea, since they are to be seen regularly about our shores in spring and autumn, at the time of their passage.' (*The Zoologist* 3: 1118, 1121, November 1845).

Twenty-five years ago, in November 1970, the highlights were at least 2,000 Little Auks *Alle alle* off the Isle of May (Fife), about 45 Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* and flocks of up to 300 Bohemian Waxwings *Bombycilla garrulus* at 75 localities in 30 counties. Three of the year's four Pallas's Leaf Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus* were in November, including one far inland, at Weston-under-Lizard (Staffordshire). (*Brit. Birds* 64: 90-92, 339-371)



MONTHLY MARATHON



We have a winner!

Peter Sunesen (Denmark) has won his choice of SUNBIRD holiday in Africa, Asia or North America by achieving a 17-in-a-row sequence of correct identifications, one more than any other competitor.

The two birds in photograph number 109 (plate 97) were named by competitors as Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* (53%), European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* (44%) or Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* (3%); with a Rook *Corvus frugilegus* (38%), Carrion Crow *C. corone* (38%), Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* (14%), Yellow-billed Chough *P. graculus* (8%), Common Raven *C. corax*, Brown-necked Raven *C. ruficollis*, Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* or a second European Honey-buzzard (all less than 1%).

The two birds in photograph number 110 (plate 111) were named as Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* (73%), Golden Eagle *A. chrysaetos* (15%), Lesser Spotted Eagle *A. pomarina* (6%), White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Steppe Eagle *A. nipalensis*, Booted Eagle or Common Buzzard (all 3% or less); with a Yellow-billed Chough (31%), Red-billed Chough (18%), Carrion Crow (17%), Rook (16%), Common Raven (9%), Brown-necked Raven, European Honey-buzzard, Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* or Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* (all 3% or less).

Each of the two photographs shows a raptor being mobbed by a crow. The raptors are a Common Buzzard, photographed in Germany by Günter Rinnhofer (plate 97) and a Spotted Eagle photographed in Belgium in February 1988 by Arnoud B. van den Berg (plate 111).

In each case, the mobbing crow is either a Rook or a Carrion Crow, probably a Rook in plate 97 and probably a Carrion Crow in plate 111. In such cases, the photographer is naturally more concerned with photographing and identifying the raptor than the crow. When it came to checking the identification of the two crows, we, members of the Rarities Committee who were consulted and in one case the photographer himself could not be 100% positive about the identifications. To be wholly fair, therefore, Rook and Carrion Crow were both accepted as correct identifications for each of the two photographs.

Our commiserations go to Jon Holt, who was pipped at the post by Peter Sunesen, after a tremendous neck-and-neck run.

Now, however, we begin a new 'Monthly marathon'. The first two photographs have already appeared (plate 126 in September and plate 140 in October). The revised closing date for both of those is the same as that for the third hurdle (plate 198, below), 15th December 1995.

If you fancy a free holiday in Kenya or Thailand or Texas (to give just three possible choices), have a go. Answers to 1st, 2nd and 3rd stages (plates 126, 140 and 198) can all be sent on one postcard. Start now!



Plate 198. New 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 113: third stage in eighth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 65 of the January issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th December 1995.



MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS

195 This month's mystery bird (plate 197 on page 559, repeated overleaf as plate 199) is a small, relatively dull passerine with no obvious markings. The combination of unstreaked warm-brown upperparts, steep forehead and relatively fine bill suggests that it is a warbler of one of the genera *Acrocephalus*, *Locustella* or *Hippolais*. Unstreaked *Locustella* warblers, however, have long wide undertail-coverts concealing most of the underside of the tail and much darker underparts, so which of the remaining two genera is it?

Tradition has it that *Hippolais* warblers have short undertail-coverts and square tails (or just rounded at the corners) whilst *Acrocephalus* warblers have long undertail-coverts and distinctly rounded tails (Wallace 1964). To this list of *Hippolais* characteristics, Grant (1979) added an open-faced expression lacking dark lores and eye-stripe, stout pale legs, and uniform plumage, often pallid and lacking rich brown or rufous hues. It is rather difficult to be sure which it is. Our mystery bird appears to have a rounded tail, despite its being tightly closed. The undertail-coverts stop farther down the tail than the primaries, there are dark lores, distinct rusty hues on the flanks, and the legs do not look particularly thick or pale. There is something not quite right for an *Acrocephalus* about the bird in plates 197 & 199 (and even less so about that in plate 200, another photograph of the same species). The rather full-chested and tapering look, the pale lower mandible, combined with the rather beady eye, all seem more characteristic of a *Hippolais*. The undertail-coverts are, perhaps, slightly too short for an *Acrocephalus*, but there is little doubt about that tail shape and the dark lores.

Let us take more time over it. The bird has a peaked crown, which is mid-brown in colour with darker sides just above the supercilium, which stretches from the base of the bill to the rear of the ear-coverts. The supercilium is both wider and paler in front of the eye, and becomes much narrower behind. There is a dark loreal bar, which may perhaps continue behind the eye, with a white eye-ring, and 'cheeks' concolorous with the crown, nape, mantle and perhaps the wing-coverts, although the primaries seem to be darker. Our bird has a white throat and breast with rusty flanks, and white undertail-coverts. It is difficult to make out any colour on the tail, but there appears to be a white spot on the tip of the outer tail feather. The bill is long, with a prominently pale yellow-pink lower mandible, and the legs are pale brown. We can exclude both of the two yellow-green *Hippolais*, as, even in their 'brown-and-white phase' (if it exists), they would never be this dull; Olive-tree *H. olivetorum* and Upcher's Warblers *H. languida*, which have much heavier bills than this; and Booted Warbler *H. caligata*, which is *Phylloscopus*-like, with a relatively weak bill and square tail sides. This leaves us with only Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida*. That 'has several things going for it'. The slightly rounded tail and short wings make the undertail-coverts look relatively long and, according to Harrap (1990), it can show slightly darker sides to the crown. Those marks above the supercilium are not, however, just 'slightly' darker, and whilst, at some angles, Olivaceous can seem to have dark on the lores, they are usually pale. Given the clear light, side-on view and strength of the marking, it is difficult to believe that these are anything other than genuinely dark lores. Have we made a mistake, then, and is this an unstreaked *Acrocephalus* warbler,



Plates 199 & 200. Left, Mystery photograph 195, repeated from plate 197; right, the same species as that shown in plate 199; both Kazakhstan, June 1987 (C. Bradshaw)



Plates 201 & 202. Left, Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* of the nominate race; right, Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*; both Kazakhstan, June 1987 (C. Bradshaw)

perhaps a Paddyfield *A. agricola* or even a well-marked Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus*? Both have rusty tones on the flanks, the loreal mark, and the rounded tail. Paddyfield does show the dark mark above the eye, but also displays a supercilium at least as obvious behind as before the eye and an eye-stripe more obvious than this. Reed Warbler does not show the dark shadowing above the supercilium and, in addition, we just cannot get away from the fact that this bird shapes up like a *Hippolais*. What is it, then?

More-careful reading of both Wallace and Harrap may give some clues. Both authors specify dark lores as being typical of Booted Warbler, while Harrap also cites the now well-known dark sides to the crown (a feature unknown when Wallace originally published his work in 1964). It is still difficult, however, to

reconcile the relatively large bill and rounded tail sides with that identification. There is another possibility, which is the southern race of Booted Warbler, *rama*. There has been little published on this race until recently, although Svensson (1992) stated that it is stronger-billed, and more grey-brown above and paler below, with a more prominent white tip and edge to each outer tail feather; Williamson (1976) noted its longer tail; and Wallace (1980), in a postscript to his original work, cited a more prominent supercilium. Recently, further details have emerged, following records of individuals, possibly of this race, in Shetland (Osborn 1993) and Sweden. The Shetland bird was the 'milky-tea' colour regarded as characteristic of Booted Warbler, with a long supercilium and dark lateral crown-stripe. In the field, the structure was more reminiscent of Olivaceous Warbler, although biometrics were compatible with, and perhaps slightly favoured, *rama*. Both this and the Swedish bird appear to be worn adults and the tail ends are ragged and squared off, but photographs confirm that they look longer-tailed than do nominate Booted Warblers.

How does all this help us with our mystery bird? In all honesty, not very much. This bird, and several others like it, were photographed in June 1987, breeding in arid scrub near Tselinograd in Central Kazakhstan. There was initial disagreement amongst the birders present as to what species the birds were, as also present in the same region were birds typical of nominate Booted Warbler (plate 201), with paler upperparts and underparts, shorter bills and squarer tails, numerous Olivaceous Warblers of the race *elaieca*, and, in adjacent reedbeds, Paddyfield Warblers (plate 202), showing a more prominent supercilium, better-defined loreal line and longer undertail-coverts than the mystery bird. Our mystery birds flicked their tails and called a harsh 'tchack'; they also sang from the tops of the low bushes. The song lacked the scratchy, discordant tones of *elaieca* and was similar to the repetitive though comparatively musical song of nominate Booted, but included episodes of rather harsher notes, resembling the call, which is typical of *rama* (Cramp 1992). Everyone eventually agreed that the combination of song, dark lores and dark lateral crown-stripe meant that these birds must be Booted Warblers, and that the structure pointed strongly towards *rama*. The rounded tail and rich coloration were not and have still not been explained.

Perhaps we took too simplistic a view. Intergradation of *rama* and nominate Booted and hybridisation with *elaieca* Olivaceous Warblers are thought to occur, so a 'hybrid' is a possibility. Some authorities recognise another race, *amietensis*, which is said to be more rufous (Dement'ev & Gladkov 1968), but others feel that these are intergrades between *rama* and *caligata* or even perhaps a rufous morph of *rama* (S. Madge *in litt.*). In addition, could there be some poorly described races of Paddyfield Warbler that we have not considered? The best guess for our mystery bird is, therefore, a Booted Warbler of the race *rama*, but this is by no means the last word. We should be interested to hear other opinions both on our mystery bird and on this group in general.

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This month, British BirdShop is on pages xi & xii (facing page 572).

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Please send slides or prints to Mrs Sheila Cobban, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.



SHORT REVIEWS

Irish Birds. By **David Cabot.** (HarperCollins, London, 1995. 224 pages. ISBN 0-00-220023-6. Paperback £7.99) The common Irish birds (143 species) each receive one page, including one or two paintings and around 150-200 words of text, covering habitat, behaviour and so on as well as identification. Unfortunately, species are grouped under habitats, which separates closely related (and therefore similar-looking) species. This silly system ought to have been discarded long ago: beginners should be encouraged to identify a bird as a warbler or a duck or a thrush as step 1 in the identification process.

The artist is not credited on the title page and the copyright credits 'Artwork HarperCollins Publishers', but by careful searching one finds that the paintings are in fact by Norman Arlott, who should surely have been given equal status to that of the author of the text, since any identification guide depends at least as much on the reliability of the illustrations as on the reliability of the accompanying words.

Putting these criticisms aside, this little book will do nothing but good in promoting an interest in and a sensible attitude towards Ireland's birds.
JTRS

Bird Habitats & Conservation. By **David Chandler & Mike Langman.** (Hamlyn, London, 1995. 48 pages. ISBN 0-600-57982-4. £7.99) This book provides an excellent, concise overview of bird habitats and conservation today. As part of the series of Hamlyn 'Young Ornithologist's Guides', the book is clearly aimed at a younger age-group, but the comprehensive content should provide new information for even the most experienced birdwatcher. Superbly illustrated, and a 'must' for any young person with an interest in wildlife.

Steve Votier

The Birds of Badenoch & Strathspey. By **Roy Dennis.** (Colin Baxter Photography Ltd, Grantown-on-Spey, 1995. 160 pages. ISBN 0-948661-62-3. Paperback £8.95) This handy-sized guide provides up-to-date information on one of the most important and popular areas of Britain. The early chapters set the scene, describing the various habitats, climate, ornithological year and places to visit. The

species accounts are short and include a few histograms summarising the data. A checklist with bar graph is a very useful quick source of information for working out the optimum time to see each of the 237 species recorded.

David Clugston

Portrait of Wildlife on a Hill Farm. By **Anne McBride & Tony Pearce.** Illustrations by **Darren Rees.** (Whittet Books, London, 1995. 160 pages. ISBN 1-873580-18-5. £25.00) The farm is Gilfach near Rhayader in Powys, which has not been 'improved' since the seventeenth century and is now maintained by the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust. The text is readable (rather than consisting of lists and tables) and is delightfully enhanced by scores of evocative paintings by Darren Rees.

JTRS

Mammal Detective. By **Rob Strachan.** (Whittet Books, London, 1995. 128 pages. ISBN 1873580-20-7. Paperback £7.99) For the non-mammalogist, this is a fascinating book, filled with tips on how to study mammals and to identify the signs which they leave in the countryside (droppings, footprints, chew marks, and so on). Includes many helpful drawings interspersed with irritatingly silly cartoons (a feature of this series, presumably intended to attract younger and less-serious readers). Inclusion of scientific names (at the very least in a short appendix) would have been helpful.

JTRS

Birding in Ohio. By **Tom Thomson.** (Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis. 2nd edn. 1994. 268 pages. ISBN 0-253-20874-2. Paperback £11.99) This useful book details over 300 birding sites in Ohio, listed alphabetically within each of three regions. County maps show the approximate locations of each site; other maps generally show location rather than trail details. Each site entry includes information on habitat, access and the birds to be found. Finally, there is an annotated checklist of the birds of Ohio. If you are birding in Ohio, this book is a must.

Nigel Redman



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

More lottery funds for conservation

We mentioned last month (*Brit. Birds* 88: 490) that a way had been found of securing money for conservation from the National Lottery through the National Heritage Memorial Fund. News has now reached us that a grant from this fund of £75,147 has been given to the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to purchase the 10.7-ha Buckleaze Farm on the edge of Jones's Mill nature reserve in Pewsey. A habitat for such important birds as Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*, Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, this area of lake, reedbed, wet grassland and shallow pools is also home to some of the scarcest sedges *Carex* in the country, a nationally rare snail, and large numbers of butterflies and dragonflies. Once the purchase has been completed, an army of volunteers will undertake a number of habitat-management tasks.

Shetland Bird Club centenary

Not 100 years old, but the one-hundredth *SBC Newsletter* (November 1994-March 1995), published just 21 years (there's another reason to celebrate!) after the first in January 1974.

Issue number 100 of *The Shetland Bird Club Newsletter* includes the usual news of birds, people and plans, plus accounts of their best day's birdwatching by John & Ad Clifton (migration on Happy Island, China) and Nick

Dymond (Grey-crowned Cuckoo *Cuculus langbianis* in Vietnam). It was a very nice touch by the editors, Chris Donald and Kevin Osborn, to include a reproduction of the very first *Newsletter* as an integral part of the one-hundredth.

Membership of the SBC is just £6.00. Write to Kevin Osborn, 20 Nederdale, Lerwick, Shetland.

Cyprus expedition

Thirty members of the Royal Air Force Ornithological Society, with the co-operation of the two Cyprus ornithological societies, conducted an ornithological survey of the Akamas Peninsula, in the extreme northwest of Cyprus, during 23rd March to 3rd May 1995. The primary aims were to determine the scale and timing of the spring migration and to record the breeding species. This was achieved by 1,800 man-hours of bird-ringing and over 1,200 man-hours of census fieldwork on set transects.

Of the 127 species recorded, 36 were breeding. A total of 3,516 birds of 65 species

was ringed. In the census area, Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*, only recently confirmed as a Cyprus breeding bird, was more numerous than Cyprus Warbler *S. melanothorax*.

Sponsorship for the expedition was provided by the Royal Air Force Ornithological Society, the Trenchard Memorial Award Fund and Marshall of Cambridge Aerospace; logistic and administrative support was provided by Commander British Forces Cyprus. A follow-up expedition is being planned. (Contributed by J. N. Wells)

Silent Fields

On 24th July, on the sweltering first day of the Royal Welsh Show, William Hague visited the RSPB's stand. John Redwood's young successor as Secretary of State for Wales paid tribute to the Society's work, noting that its membership was larger than that of any political party, and that it probably talked more sense than any political party!

He was there to launch the RSPB's new publication highlighting the demise of farmland birds in Wales — *Silent Fields/Gwlad Tawel: the current status of farmland birds in Wales* by Roger Lovegrove, Mike Shrubbs and Iolo Williams. This timely report contains a wealth of useful facts and figures documenting

the changes in agriculture in the principality since the 1930s and the changes in populations of twelve species of farmland bird. The information on birds, including Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* and Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, comes from a mix of survey results and anecdotal evidence, this last gleaned from interviews with a wide range of landowners, farmers and birdwatchers.

It is a discussion document, aimed at stimulating debate to find the right formulae to help stem the decline in farmland birds in Wales. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

BTO launches Farmland Appeal

For the first time in its 62-year history, the BTO has launched a Farmland Bird Appeal, to raise funds not only from its members, but also from industry, farmers and the general public. The BTO believes that the problems facing our farmland birds are so great that new, wide-ranging research must urgently be undertaken to identify the detailed causes of the declines and provide advice on how to rectify them. The Appeal's emblem is the Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* and will thus be known as SOS — 'Save our Skylarks'. Apart from the Sky Lark, of which there are thought to be

3,000,000 fewer breeding here now than there were 25 years ago, another nine species have declined by more than half over the same period: Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* and Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*. Declines in these species are shown up through the BTO's ongoing Common Birds Census.

Sky Lark Survey

The BTO has announced that it is to organise a survey of Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis* in 1997. Involving many volunteers, the survey aims to discover the detailed reasons for the decline of Sky Larks, and thus to enable the BTO to offer advice to farmers on how to help this beleaguered species. This will be one of the major new studies on farmland birds to result from the 'Save Our Skylarks' Appeal launched this summer, to raise funds for a number of farmland research projects. Further information on this can be obtained from the BTO, National Centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

Nightjars make northern comeback

One of our rarest birds is breaking new ground and increasing its numbers in Forest Enterprise's North York Moors woodlands at Dalby Forest, near Pickering. According to a recent survey undertaken by the North Yorkshire Forest Bird Study Group, this 3,500-ha area is home to an expanding colony of European Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus*, with 42 singing males, an increase of 27% in the past three years. That makes it not only the largest colony in Yorkshire, but also the biggest in any British upland area.

Ian Prestt Memorial Appeal

The re-creation of Lakenheath Fen—the restoration of 240 ha of farmland to its previous state—is the £1 million project being launched by the RSPB in memory of the late Ian Prestt, the Society's former Director and President, who lived only 16 km from the site.

Anyone wishing to help to re-create the Fen and remember Ian should send their contribution to the Ian Prestt Memorial Appeal, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

New seabird atlas

The most important areas of the North Sea have been identified in a new atlas published by BirdLife International at the same time as the June 'Fourth North Sea Conference' was being held at Esbjerg, Denmark. Lack of information can no longer be used as an excuse to postpone urgently needed conservation measures. Twenty key areas are identified where internationally important concentrations of seabirds occur. These include some of the waters around Orkney and Shetland, sections of the Dogger Bank

and parts of the English Channel. It is to be hoped that BirdLife International can persuade countries surrounding the North Sea to adopt suitable conservation measures for these newly identified areas. For further information on *Important Bird Areas for Seabirds in the North Sea, including the Channel and the Kattegat*, by H. Skov, J. Durinck, M. Leopold and M. Tasker, write to BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA.

Helping in Albania

The Italian organisation Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli (LIPU) is organising expeditions to Albania to survey the wintering, migrating and breeding birds during October 1995 to June 1996.

Volunteers who would like to join these expeditions are welcomed. The word 'volunteer' needs to be stressed, for neither the Albanian Society for the Protection of Birds and Mammals nor LIPU has any money for the expeditions, so participation will be at the participants' own expense.

Expeditions have already taken place in April 1994 and October 1995; there will be others during 12th-19th January 1996, 5th-12th April 1996, 31st May to 6th June 1996 and 21st-28th June 1996.

Anyone interested in taking part in the expeditions should contact Fabio Casale, IBA Officer, LIPU, V.lo S. Tiburzio, 5, 43100 Parma, Italy; fax +39 521 287116. (Contributed by Barbara Lombatti)

Tunnickliffe artwork for auction

The 114 paintings that the late Charles Tunnickliffe undertook for Christmas cards and magazine covers for the RSPB are being auctioned by Sotheby's in London on 22nd November 1995. Half the paintings will be shown at preview exhibitions in Wales and Scotland before the final preview in London. Two of the most important paintings will not be sold but will instead be given on long-term loan to the Oriel Ynys Môn (Anglesey Heritage Gallery) near Llangefni, which already houses a superb collection of Tunnickliffe paintings and drawings.

Catalogues for the collection (the first which Sotheby's has produced on recycled paper) are available, price £9 (plus £2 postage in UK), from the Catalogue Subscriptions Department, Sotheby's, 34-35 New Bond Street, London W1A 2AA.

Dee Estuary Ramsar Monitoring Report published

July saw the publication of the monitoring report on the Dee Estuary, situated on the English/Welsh border, following a visit to this Ramsar site last year by a team of international experts. In 1992, the Dee was included in the Montreux Record, a list of Ramsar sites in need of priority conservation attention, and it was agreed that the Ramsar monitoring procedure should be applied. The recommendations in the report have the ultimate aim of enabling the Dee to be removed from the Montreux Record. Anyone wishing to obtain a copy of the Report should contact the Department of the Environment, European Wildlife Division, Room 906, Tollgate House, Bristol BS2 9DJ.

Welsh Wildlife Trusts Ltd

The seven Wildlife Trusts in Wales officially came together on 7th July 1995 under the banner of The Welsh Wildlife Trusts Ltd. Sir David Attenborough, National President of the Wildlife Trusts, presided over the launch at the National Museum of Wales. The aim of The Welsh Wildlife Trusts Ltd is to enable the seven trusts to work more closely together on national issues, to attract funding for projects and to raise awareness of their work. The new director of the WWT Ltd is Robin Cross, formerly director of the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust.

Further details are available from WWT Ltd, Collot House, 20 Severn Street, Welshpool, Powys SY21 7AD. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

News from France

More often than not, news about birds in France has been on the negative side. How encouraging, then, to hear some positive—and sometimes surprising—news on what is happening ornithologically across the Channel.

Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* have undergone a population explosion in recent years, the source of the well-known influxes into southern Britain, but how many people who do not scan the pages of our 'European news' are fully aware that there are over 300 pairs of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* and more than 30 pairs of Black Storks *C. nigra* nesting in France now, many in the northern half of the country? Knowing the French attitude to

things American, it is ironic that we may be exporting Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* in their direction. It may not be too long, however, before there is a reverse transfer of Sacred Ibises *Threskiornis aethiopicus*, now well established in Brittany and the northwest. Of course, there are threats to bird populations, too, many being the all-too-familiar Europe-wide ones of habitat degradation and pollution, as well as the well-publicised hunting pressures. Migrating birds are in particular need of protection, as such large numbers from the west European populations have to pass through France to and from their wintering grounds. (Contributed by Ken Hall)

'L'Oiseau'

What better way to brush up your French than to read about birds and birding in that wonderful yet oh! so infuriating country just across the English Channel. The LPO (Ligue Française pour la Protection des Oiseaux) publishes this excellent magazine four times a year, with articles on conservation, birding sites, status of breeding species, personalities, current news, etc. In full colour throughout, it provides a real eye-opener on developments in France, a country whose inhabitants are popularly thought to view birds only along the barrels of a 12-bore. Yet membership of the

LPO, the foremost French bird-protection organisation, and the French partner for BirdLife International, has more than doubled in five years to over 20,000 by mid 1995; and the society is actively acquiring more and more land as bird reserves.

It is now possible to join the LPO and to subscribe to its publications through a UK address. If you want to know more about birds in France and support their conservation, contact Ken Hall, LPO (UK), The Anchorage, The Chalks, Chew Magna, Bristol BS18 8SN (tel.: 01275 332980), for more details.

More Red Kites released

The second phase of the project to release Red Kites *Milvus milvus* into England took place in July, when nine young birds brought in from Spain were released at a secret Forestry Commission woodland in the English Midlands, where they were given a helping hand by Forestry Minister, Mr Tim Boswell. Each bird carries a tiny radio transmitter and coloured wing-tags to enable its movements to be tracked by the project team. Similar releases of the Red Kite in southern England over a number of years have resulted in a self-sustaining breeding population.

The BIY winner says . . .

'I am, naturally, delighted at winning Bird Illustrator of the Year, and will treasure my silver salver and wonderful *Korwa* telescope.

'The Richard Richardson Award has, along with the BIY, been a huge help to myself and many other artists/illustrators, and a very useful road into wildlife art.' (Extract from a letter received from Andrew Stock)

For Red Kite read Black Vulture!

It is always nice to hear of expertise gained being shared between communities in the name of bird conservation. This is the case with the Kite Country Project, which recently shared the expertise gained in protecting Red Kites *Milvus milvus* in Wales with Kostas Pistolas, from the Greek National Park at Dadia, where the at-one-time-almost-extinct Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* is now flourishing owing to the successful establishment of a feeding station in the Rhodopi Mountains, which also now attracts 10,000 human visitors annually.

Learning how high technology was used to view the kites and other raptors, Kostas was especially interested in copying the techniques used to transmit live pictures of birds to visitor centres. He was also shown how the Kite Country Project has used green power from wind generators and solar panels to help to operate cameras in remote, mountainous areas of Wales, similar to areas of Dadia.

Wing-tagged Ruddy Ducks

Over the past two years, the issue of Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* from the UK moving to the Continent and on to Spain, where they hybridise with the globally threatened White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala*, has caused great controversy (see *Brit. Birds* 86: 338; 87: 394-395, 494; 88: 243-244).

A total of 32 Ruddy Ducks at Abberton Reservoir, Essex, has been marked with coloured wing-tags. These are either yellow or orange and are marked with one or two digits in either black or white. Despite their bright colour, the tags can often be hidden behind the birds' plumage so that they may not be instantly noticeable.

We ask anyone watching Ruddy Ducks in the UK (or abroad!) to be extra vigilant for any with wing-tags. If you do see a Ruddy Duck with a wing-tag, please record details of location, date, wing-tag colour and inscription colour, inscription (if you can read it), and any other information, such as the number of Ruddy Ducks present at the site and their status (whether breeding or wintering, resident or seasonal visitor).

Send details of any observations to Colour Marked Wildfowl, WWT, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire GL2 7BT. All reports will be acknowledged, with details of the bird's known history. (Contributed by Richard Hearn)

Rarity descriptions

It is very helpful if all observers of rarities send in their descriptions (preferably to the relevant county or regional recorder) as soon as possible after the sighting. It will speed up the decision-making process if notes on all major autumn rarities are submitted by mid November at the latest. *Please do not wait until January.* Thank you. (Contributed by M. J. Rogers)

Cormorants galore

If you have an interest in Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo*, the journal *Ardea* is for you. Specifically, the mammoth 338-page latest issue (vol. 83, number 1), with 32 papers (all in English, not Dutch) on the species.

For details, contact Nederlandse Ornithologische Unie, P. Starmans, Oude Arnhemsweg 261, 3705 BD Zeist, The Netherlands.

Grasshopper Warbler extinct in Sussex?

In spring 1995, Robert Edgar reported on 'the parlous state of the Sussex breeding population of the Grasshopper Warbler [*Locustella naevia*] and the imminence of extinction' and appealed for any on territory during the summer to be reported at once. The autumn 1995 *Sussex Ornithological Society* (appropriately SOS!) *Newsletter* states that, by 2nd July, not a single report had been received.

Ragged Robins

What a marvellous opportunity to provide some really attractive Christmas stamps: this year the Royal Mail has commissioned five designs of Robins *Erithacus rubecula*. Unfortunately, the artist chosen—who may be very good at landscapes or portraits or still life, for all we know—is totally inept, in our opinion, when it comes to drawing birds. Instead of life-like Robins (or even humorous, cartoon-like Robins, which would have been acceptable), the Christmas stamps show five badly drawn Robin-patterned objects, resembling badly stuffed skins. Even the scale is usually wrong: a beginner's error.

The many wildlife postage stamps from around the World are generally of a very high standard, but these pathetic designs this year make us cringe with embarrassment. We certainly shall not be putting any of them on our envelopes.

There is a Society of Wildlife Artists. Let us hope that the Royal Mail learns its lesson and in the future, if it needs designs showing birds (or mammals or plants or insects), consults with the SWLA concerning its choice of artists.

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RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 18th September to 15th October 1995.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* Off St Ives (Cornwall), 24th September.

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* Jersey (Channel Islands), 4th-13th October.

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus* Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 8th-15th October.

Sociable Lapwing *Chettusia gregaria* Poxwell (Dorset), 14th October.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* Kilbaha (Co. Clare), 10th October; St Mary's (Scilly), 12th October.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Beachy Head (East Sussex), 8th October.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* Foula (Shetland), 21st-24th September; Nanquidno (Cornwall), 5th October.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* Lundy (Devon), 9th October.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* Sumburgh Head (Shetland), 1st October.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* Unst (Shetland), 2nd October.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* Seaham Hall (Co. Durham), 21st September; Fair Isle (Shetland), 30th September; Tresco (Scilly), 15th October.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* St Kilda (Western Isles), 10th-22nd September.

Sardinian Warbler *S. melanocephala* Portland (Dorset), 12th October.

Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi* Winspit (Dorset), 12th-13th October; Porthgwarra

(Cornwall), 13th-14th October; Landguard (Suffolk), 15th October.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Dungeness (Kent), 13th October.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* Single on *MI Scillonian*, near Land's End (Cornwall), 30th September; Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) in late September; Tresco, 3rd-9th October, two on 10th October, and single on 10th-14th October; St Mary's, 7th-8th October, and two on 9th-10th October; Trevilley (Cornwall), on 9th-14th October; Lundy, 9th October; Weymouth (Dorset), 10th October; Southwold, 12th-13th October, and Thorpe Ness (both Suffolk), 12th-15th October; eight in Ireland during 5th-9th October; two Co. Wexford (both Hook Head), four Co. Cork (Ballycotton, Baltimore and Cape Clear Island), and singles Kilbaha, and Aran Islands (Co. Galway).

Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina* St Kilda, 26th September.

Northern Parula *Parula americana* St Agnes (Scilly), 10th October.

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* Singles. Brownstown Head (Co. Waterford), 11th-12th October, and Kilbaha, 12th-14th October (first and second records for Ireland and third and fourth records for Britain & Ireland).

Yellow-rumped Warbler *D. coronata* Tresco, 4th-15th October; North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 13th October.

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys* Seaforth (Merseyside), 2nd October.



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Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes* Huge irruption into Finland in August-September, with over 30,000 migrants seen and over 2,000 ringed. Will any reach Britain?



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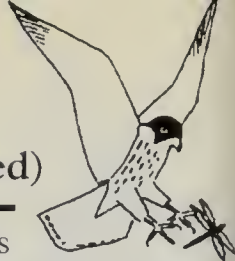
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- Adolfsson & Cherrug *Bird Identification: a reference guide* (SKF) £24.50 ☐
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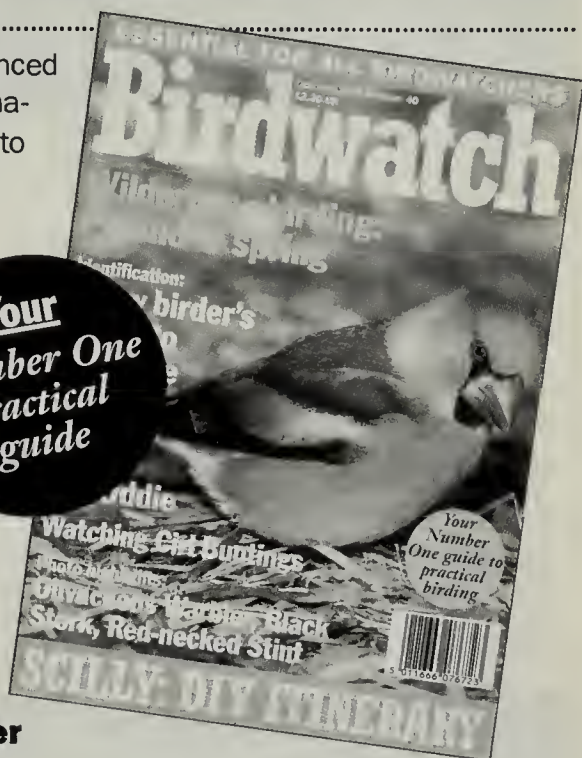
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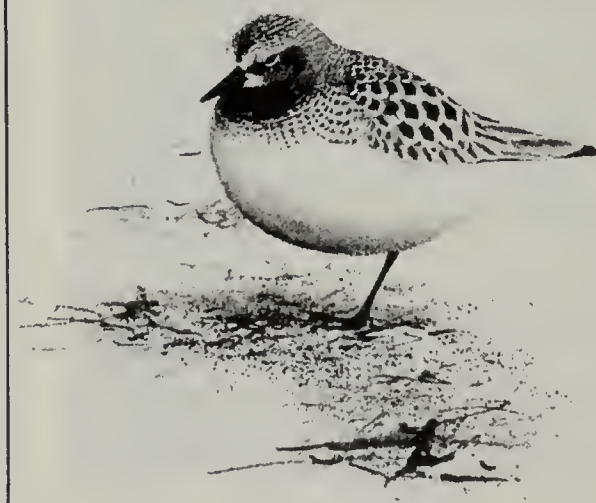
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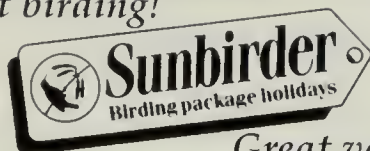
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Michael J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee

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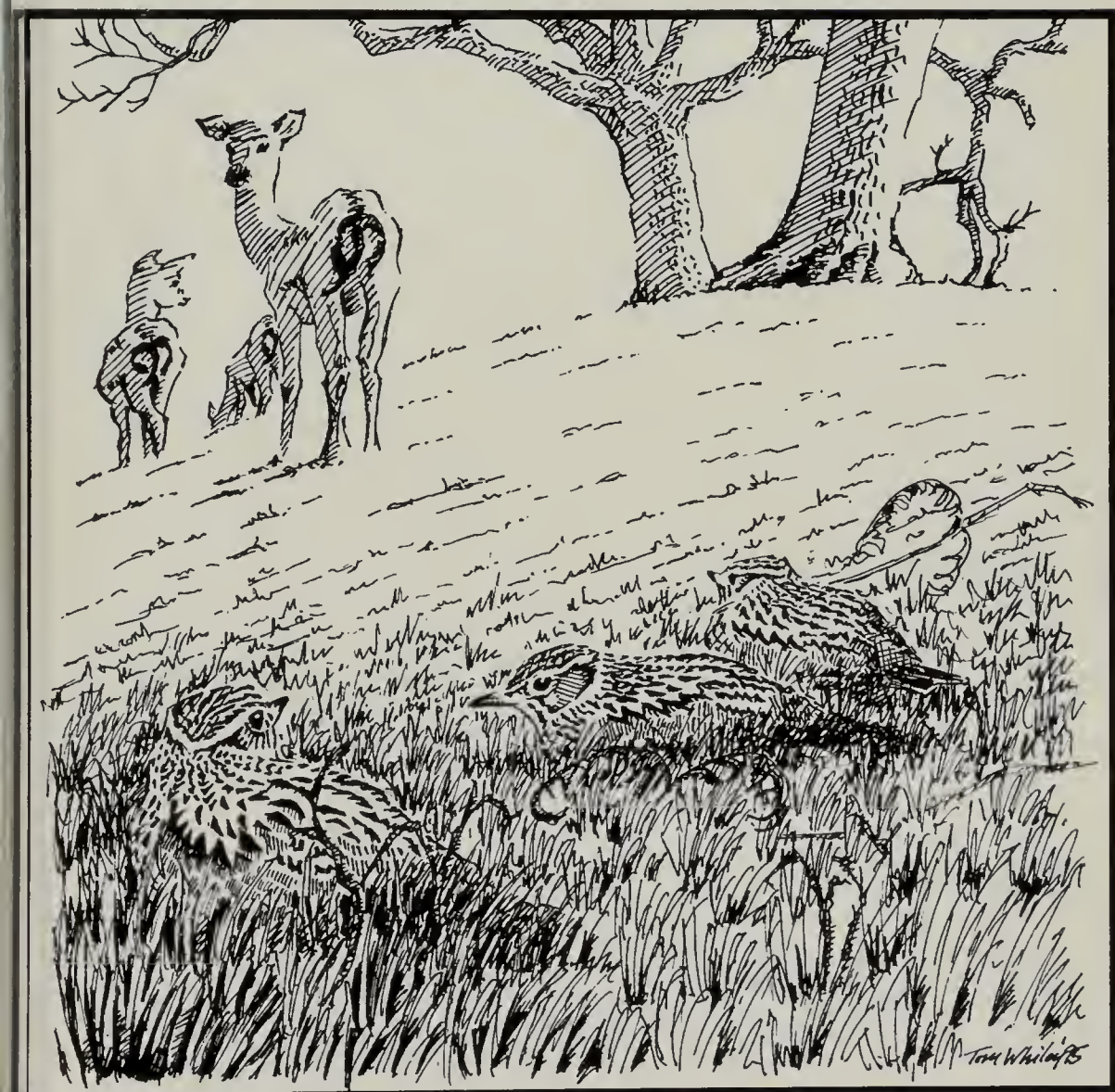
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Identification of Pine Bunting

Young Ornithologists of the Year





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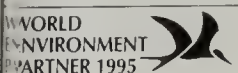
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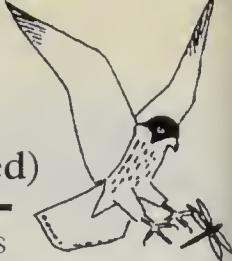
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History of breeding by Temminck's Stints in Britain

Greg P. Mudge and Roy H. Dennis

The Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* breeds along the northern fringe of Europe and Asia from Norway to Siberia (Cramp & Simmons 1983). Throughout the bulk of this range, it is associated with tundra and Arctic riverine systems.

It is a very rare breeding bird in Britain, with nesting first recorded in 1934 in the Cairngorm area of northern Scotland. This paper pulls together and documents the various breeding attempts recorded up to 1994.

The species' breeding strategy is complex, comprising a multi-clutch system involving successive bigamy by both sexes (Hildén 1975; Breichagen 1989). Typically, a female will mate with one male and leave him to incubate the first clutch; she will then mate with a second male and incubate that clutch herself. Some females may move a considerable distance between the sites where first and second clutches are laid. Data here are, therefore, presented as numbers of individuals and are not interpreted as pairs.

Given their extreme rarity, it is necessary to keep current and recently occupied sites confidential. Earlier sites, where locations have been published in the past, are, however, referred to by name.

Methods

The main data sources for this review are records kept by RHD (up to 1987) and the register of records submitted to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (based on reports from individual observers, information supplied by regional recorders and Schedule 1 licence returns). Additional information was collected from the Scottish Bird Report, from published articles and from personal records kept both by the authors and by naturalists local to the nesting sites. In the reports of the RBBP up to 1982, Temminck's Stint sites were given a county code (e.g. County

A, County B). RBBP reports from 1983 to the present switched to using broader geographical regions of Scotland (e.g. Scotland, N & W). Coding of sites in this paper encompasses both these conventions.

Results

Details for individual sites where breeding has been confirmed follow in approximate chronological order.

Loch Morlich, Highland

The first documented record of breeding by Temminck's Stints in Britain was at Loch Morlich in Inverness-shire in 1934 (Edwards 1934; Crapnell 1934). Breeding was also known to have occurred there in 1936 and 1956 (Nethersole-Thompson & Watson 1974). In each year, just a single nest was seen and no more than two birds were ever present. All known nests failed and chicks have never been recorded at this site. Temminck's Stints were also recorded at the site in 1935 and 1947, but without any evidence of breeding. The loch is now very popular for watersports and with tourists, while the loch side is now much more heavily vegetated than in the past, with bushes right down to the water's edge.

England

Nesting was confirmed at a site in central Yorkshire in 1951, when a nest with four eggs was found and a single adult was seen (Chislett 1952). The nest failed and an adult was found dead nearby. There have been no other reported nesting attempts at this site, nor anywhere else in England.

County A; Scotland, N & W

Temminck's Stints were first reported from this site in 1969 and breeding was first confirmed, with chicks seen, in 1971 (Headlam 1972; Dennis 1972; table 1). In the 26 years during 1969-94, adults have been recorded in 21 years and breeding confirmed in 11 years. The maximum number of adults seen in any one year was six. Breeding success has been variable, with chicks seen in just eight years. The best season was 1987, with four or five broods of chicks. This site is the only locality in Britain where breeding has persisted in the 1990s.

County B; Scotland, N & W

Temminck's Stints were seen at this site in each year during 1974-86, but not since. Breeding was confirmed in 1976, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981 and 1982, and chicks were seen in five of those years (table 2). The maximum number of adults recorded was eight, in 1978.

County A, site 2

Nesting was confirmed in only one year, 1978, when two consecutive clutches of four eggs were found. Both clutches failed as a result of flooding, and only a single adult was ever seen. Two adults were song-flighting in May and June 1980, but there was no proof of breeding.

Table 1. Annual records of Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* at site 1 in County A (Scotland, N & W).

Year	No. of adults	Breeding confirmed	Chicks seen	Year	No. of adults	Breeding confirmed	Chicks seen
1969	+	—	—	1982	0	—	—
1970	+	—	—	1983	0	—	—
1971	2+	+	2	1984	0	—	—
1972	4	—	—	1985	2	—	—
1973	3	+	+	1986	4	+	2+
1974	3+	+	+	1987	6	+	9+
1975	0	—	—	1988	6	+	—
1976	1	—	—	1989	+	+	4+
1977	1	—	—	1990	5	+	2+
1978	1	—	—	1991	6	—	—
1979	1	—	—	1992	3	+	—
1980	1	—	—	1993	4	+	2
1981	0	—	—	1994	4	+	—

Table 2. Annual records of Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* at the site in County B (Scotland, N & W).

Year	No. of adults	Breeding confirmed	Chicks seen	Year	No. of adults	Breeding confirmed	Chicks seen
1974	2	—	—	1981	7	+	2
1975	5+	—	—	1982	2	+	4
1976	5	+	2	1983	4	+?	—
1977	5-7	+?	+?	1984	2	—	—
1978	8+	+	—	1985	1-2	—	—
1979	6	+	+	1986	1	—	—
1980	4	+	+	1987-94	0	—	—

County D (Loch Lomond)

Nesting was proved in 1979, when a nest with four eggs was found (Mitchell 1983). Only one adult was ever seen, and the eggs disappeared prior to hatching. Singles were again seen in 1980 and 1981, but breeding was not proved.

In addition to the above, there are two sites where Temminck's Stints have been seen and breeding suspected or thought likely, but never proved.

County C

A Temminck's Stint was seen at this site during the breeding season, on 4th July 1977 (and possibly also on 7th July), but there was no suggestion of breeding.

County E

Two Temminck's Stints were recorded displaying in June 1979; one was present in June 1980; one in June 1981; one in May and June 1982; and two in July 1986. Although likely to have taken place, breeding was never confirmed.

Several further sightings of Temminck's Stints during the breeding season have been claimed in recent decades at other localities in northern Scotland, but these remain unconfirmed and undocumented.

Breeding habitats

The sites where breeding by Temminck's Stints has been recorded in Britain have varied widely in their habitat characteristics. One site is at sea level in an estuarine location, while others are associated with freshwater habitats at altitudes of up to 330 m. A common feature of the Scottish breeding locations has been their association with the extensive marsh habitats (freshwater or brackish) formed at river deltas. In other parts of their European and Asian breeding range, Temminck's Stints have been recorded breeding in a variety of different situations. Cramp & Simmons (1983), for example, referred to nesting mainly near inlets and fjords, deltas and rivers or streams and to an altitude of 1,200 m or more inland. This implies that a wide range of locations in Britain has the potential to support breeding Temminck's Stints.

Discussion

Britain is the most southerly and westerly position in the breeding range of Temminck's Stint. Since breeding was first recorded in 1934, the species has cropped up at a scattering of localities. The recorded occupancy of these localities has mostly been brief, although two Scottish localities have supported breeding for many years and one of these has been occupied since 1969 to the present day (with a five-year gap in which no Temminck's Stints were recorded).

Breeding has been confirmed at a total of six sites and probably occurred at a seventh. At peak abundance in the late 1970s and early 1980s (table 3), up to

Table 3. Total numbers of breeding Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* recorded in each year at sites across Britain.

Year	No. of localities	No. of adults	Breeding confirmed	Chicks seen	Year	No. of localities	No. of adults	Breeding confirmed	Chicks seen
1934	1	2	+	—	1979	4	10	+	+
1935	1	2	—	—	1980	5	9	+	+
1936	1	1	+	—	1981	3	9	+	2
1947	1	1	—	+	1982	2	3	+	4
1951	1	1	+	—	1983	1	4	+?	—
1956	1	1	+	—	1984	1	2	—	—
1969	1	+	—	—	1985	2	3-4	—	—
1970	1	+	—	—	1986	3	7	+	2+
1971	1	2+	+	2	1987	1	6	+	9+
1972	1	4	—	—	1988	1	6	+	—
1973	1	3	+	+	1989	1	+	+	4+
1974	2	5+	+	+	1990	1	5	+	2+
1975	1	5+	—	—	1991	1	6	—	—
1976	2	6	+	2	1992	1	3	+	—
1977	2	6-8	+?	+?	1993	1	4	+	2
1978	3	10+	+	—	1994	1	4	+	—

five sites were occupied concurrently in any one year and ten or more adults were recorded. Breeding success has been poor, with chicks seen at only two sites. The best year on record was 1987, when four or five broods were seen at one site.

Temminck's Stints are small and largely inconspicuous, although their song-flight is distinctive. It is probable that existing records underestimate the real number and frequency of breeding attempts. Nonetheless, this species has but a tenuous toehold in Britain, at the extreme edge of its breeding range. In conservation terms, there is little that can be done, apart from seeking to ensure that those areas where breeding is attempted are kept confidential (to avoid disturbance and the attentions of egg-collectors) and that habitat features are maintained.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the many observers who have sent in records over the years to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. We shall not name names for site-security reasons.

Summary

The Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* is a rare breeding species in Britain. The first reported breeding was in 1934 in northern Scotland, but it was not until 1971 that chicks were known to have been produced. During 1934-94, breeding was confirmed at six different sites, all but one in Scotland. Chicks have, however, been recorded at only two of these sites. The maximum number of adults recorded in any one year was ten in 1978 and 1979. At present, breeding is known to occur at only a single site in northern Scotland, where between three and six adults have been seen annually in recent years (1990-94). Actions are being taken to ensure that habitat conditions remain suitable at this site.

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Studies of West Palearctic birds★



195. Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Andrew Hoodless

The Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* is an elusive bird which has evoked a sense of awe and mystery amongst naturalists for centuries. Even today, many birders regard it as a mysterious species and are intrigued by its peculiar roding flights and calls. The Eurasian Woodcock (henceforth referred to simply as Woodcock) is rarely seen on the ground owing to its cryptic plumage, and when disturbed in woodland it quickly disappears by means of a zig-zag flight. For most of the year, the Woodcock is solitary and silent, the obvious exception being during periods of roding at dawn and dusk in spring and early summer. The species has long been hunted in Britain and Ireland in winter, and much has been written in sporting literature about the arrival of migrant birds and the habitat associations of Woodcocks in winter. Until recent decades, however, the Woodcock was probably the British-breeding wader about which least was known of its behaviour and breeding biology.

When seen at close range, the two most arresting features of the Woodcock's appearance are its long tapering bill (67-80 mm, about 20% of its total length) and its large dark eyes set back in the crown of the head. The sexes are similar in

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plumage and morphology and are impossible to tell apart in the field other than by their behaviour during the breeding season. Even in the hand, there is as yet no definitive method of distinguishing males from females, although males tend to have marginally shorter bills and longer tails than females (Clausager 1973a). Although still a rare occurrence, Woodcocks with noticeably short bills (40–55 mm) have been recorded with increasing frequency during the last 20 years or so. The cause of this abnormality has yet to be determined, but in most cases the birds are apparently in good condition and seem to survive as well as do normal individuals.

Martin (1994) has demonstrated that Woodcocks are unable to see the tips of their bills and concluded that they do not forage visually. In common with that of other scolopacid waders, the tip of the Woodcock's bill contains many sensitive nerve endings and it seems that Woodcocks rely on tactile and chemical cues when feeding. Their food consists of soil invertebrates, primarily earthworms, beetle larvae and fly larvae, which are obtained mainly by probing. The unusual position of the eyes enables the Woodcock to see the entire hemisphere above and behind its head, an ability which is undoubtedly important in predator avoidance.

Distribution, habitat and migration

There is a total of six species within the genus *Scolopax*, of which *S. rusticola* is the only one inhabiting the Western Palearctic. The American Woodcock *S. minor* is found in the Nearctic, whilst *S. saturata*, *S. celebensis* and *S. rochussenii* are limited to Indonesia and New Guinea, and *S. mira* is confined to the Ryukyu Islands. The breeding range of the Eurasian Woodcock probably comprises the entire temperate and boreal Palearctic and, apart from some scattered southern populations, the distribution limits lie between the July isotherms of 12°C in the north and 24°C in the south.

In Norway the northern distribution limit lies at 70°N, in Sweden and Finland at 66°N, and farther east it goes down to 64°N. In Siberia, the northern distribution is believed to coincide with that of the Siberian Fir *Abies sibirica* (Vaurie 1965). Island populations in the Azores, Madeira and the Canaries, as well as in Corsica, form the southern limit to the Woodcock's distribution. The southern limit on the mainland is less certain because, in this area, only high-altitude regions are inhabited. The limit runs through northern Spain (Pyrénées), the mountainous parts of southern France and northern Italy and then south into the Tuscan Apennines. It then follows the southern edge of the taiga at about 50°N as far east as southern Japan.

About one-third of the global Woodcock population breeds in Europe and by far the largest numbers are found in the former USSR and Fennoscandia, with over 90% of the European population occurring in these regions (Piersma 1986). These populations are migratory, wintering throughout western and southern Europe, but particularly in France, Spain, the United Kingdom and Italy. The breeding populations of northwestern Europe are largely sedentary.

Although related to snipes *Gallinago*, sandpipers *Tringa/Calidris* and curlews *Numenius*, Woodcocks are rarely found in coastal habitats except on migration and are generally associated with woodland. This is reflected in the bird's German and French names of *Waldschnepfe* and *Bécasse des bois*, meaning 'Snipe of the

Woods' and 'Long-billed bird of the Woods', respectively. The preferred breeding habitat is deciduous or mixed woodland (Clausager 1972), but conifer plantations are used up to the thicket stage (Shorten 1974; Marchant *et al.* 1990), as are large patches of Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* in upland areas. Clausager (1972) concluded that, even in deciduous forests, the younger stands (aged 1-20 years as opposed to 21-100 years) were more densely populated. Where still present, coppice Hazel *Corylus avellana* probably provides good habitat for breeding Woodcocks. Data from the British Trust for Ornithology's National Sites Register suggest that in Britain there is a higher incidence of breeding in large woods (>80 ha), and that woods of less than 10 ha are rarely used (Fuller 1982). Clausager (1972) reported that in Denmark the minimum size of woods frequented by Woodcocks was 20-30 ha. Kalchreuter (1983) has suggested that, in many cases, increased disturbance by Man in small woods is probably the limiting factor rather than woodland size itself.

In Scotland, Woodcocks breed in sparse woods of scattered birch *Betula*, but show a preference for dense patches of naturally regenerating saplings (Hoodless 1994). In mature deciduous woodland, an understorey of brambles *Rubus*, Hazel, Holly *Ilex aquifolium* or Bracken provides cover from avian predators (Hirons & Johnson 1987). Nevertheless, breeding Woodcocks have also been found on treeless islands off the Irish coast (Shorten 1974), and I have found nests in Heather *Calluna vulgaris* on Scottish moorland. Earthworm-rich soils are chosen by Woodcocks for feeding areas during the breeding season, and, in lowland mixed deciduous woodland, Hirons & Johnson (1987) found that Woodcocks fed almost exclusively in stands dominated by Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* or Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* and avoided areas of Beech *Fagus sylvatica* and mature conifers owing to their low densities of soil invertebrates. Wide rides and small clearings (1-3 ha) are important to provide easy access and flight paths in large woods (Shorten 1974).

The habitat requirements are less specific in winter, and patches of Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, willow *Salix* and Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* often hold Woodcocks during the day. This is probably because, in winter, Woodcocks become nocturnal and frequent nearby fields to feed. Consequently, areas with permanent pasture or long-rotation grass leys within about 1 km of woods are preferred, as these types of field support high densities of soil invertebrates (Hirons & Bickford-Smith 1983; Granval 1988).

The Woodcock's breeding distribution in Britain and Ireland has changed little during the twentieth century, with absences only from Devon, Cornwall and south and west Wales (Witherby *et al.* 1940; Sharrock 1976; Gibbons *et al.* 1993). The reason why there are no breeding Woodcocks in these areas is still unclear. They each, however, support very high densities of Woodcocks in winter, and possible explanations for the absence in the breeding season are local extinction owing to high shooting pressure or increased overwinter mortality as a result of density-dependent effects when large numbers of migrant Continental Woodcocks are present. Breeding Woodcocks are currently most abundant in the north of England (Yorkshire, Co. Durham, Cumbria and Northumberland) and the lower-lying areas of Scotland (the Borders, eastern Tayside and the area between Inverness and Nairn). The highest numbers in southern England occur in Kent, Sussex and Surrey. Densities never seem to be particularly high,

however, even in prime habitats. Hirons' (1983) estimate of 18-23 individuals per km² during his study at Whitwell Wood in northeast Derbyshire is probably typical of the densities to be found in the best lowland deciduous woodland sites in England.

There was probably some expansion of range in southern Scotland, Wales and East Anglia during the 1950s and 1960s owing to the planting of large areas of new conifer forest (Parslow 1967), but the extent to which these were used by Woodcocks was never investigated. It seems likely that these forests are less suitable for Woodcocks now because they have reached the age where the canopy is closing. The size of the breeding population in Britain and Ireland is very difficult to estimate, but is believed to be about 36,000 individuals (10,250-26,000 'pairs'; Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Migrant Woodcocks originating mainly from Fennoscandia and the former USSR visit Britain in winter. The first of these usually arrive in northern Britain during the second week of October and those in the south about ten days later (Hoodless & Coulson 1994). The influx of overwintering migrants continues until late December and is such that the British wintering Woodcock population may number 800,000 individuals (Hirons & Linsley 1989). This means that, if there are equal numbers of young and adult British Woodcocks in winter, Continental Woodcocks comprise approximately 91% of the wintering Woodcock population in Britain.

Woodcocks winter in all counties of Britain and Ireland, but generally avoid high ground in both Scotland and northern England (Lack 1986). They are thought to be more numerous on the British east coast and in southern and western England and Wales (Tapper & Hirons 1983). Densities often reach 30 per km² in Cornwall, with its mild climate and predominance of dairy farms, but densities of eight to 12 per km² are more typical in the largely arable areas of central and southern England. On higher ground farther north, such as in North Yorkshire and Co. Durham, densities tend to be about six per km² (Hoodless 1994).

Using information on the size of breeding Woodcock populations on the Continent and the proportion of ringed individuals recovered in Britain, I have estimated the proportions arriving from each country as 37% from the former USSR, 25% from Finland, 12% from Sweden and 10% from Norway (Hoodless & Coulson 1994). Comparison of the mean recovery latitudes of foreign-ringed and British-ringed Woodcocks and the proportions recovered in different areas of the British Isles indicates that by far the largest numbers of Continental migrant Woodcocks winter in southern England and Wales (Hoodless & Coulson 1994). The majority of these Continental Woodcocks depart during late February and March, but ringing has revealed that some are present in Britain until mid April. There are no records of any remaining to breed.

Breeding system

Woodcocks are most conspicuous during the spring and early summer, owing to the distinctive roding flights performed by males at dawn and dusk. Flights average six to eight minutes and individuals generally make two to five flights per evening (Hirons 1978; Ostermeyer & Ferrand 1979). During the course of these flights, the males periodically reduce their wing-beats and give two to four frog-like croaks

followed by a series of sharp 'tizik' calls. Some individuals may rode for up to an hour in a single 24-hour period (Hirons 1983). They tend to rode for longer periods at dusk than at dawn, but roding may continue sporadically for most of the night during the full-moon periods. Study of sönagrams has revealed that, within the basic call, each male has his own distinguishable voice pattern (Hirons 1978).

Until the late 1970s, the Woodcock was believed to be monogamous, and roding flights were thought to delimit the boundaries of exclusive territories (Steinfatt 1938; Tester & Watson 1973), although promiscuity had been suggested by a few observers (von Zedlitz 1927; Géroudet 1952; Bettmann 1961). During the last 15 years, thanks to radio-tracking, great advances have been made in our understanding of the breeding behaviour of the Woodcock. In a large deciduous wood in Derbyshire, Hirons (1983) found that most first-year males did not rode and that the roding areas of the older males overlapped. Males will occasionally chase one another and very rarely three or even four individuals may be involved. Hirons concluded that a dominance hierarchy was established, resulting in a few males roding the longest and obtaining all the matings with females. He later demonstrated that males roded longest over the patches of best nesting habitat (Hirons 1988a).

To prove the existence of the male hierarchy, Hirons captured the two males which he believed to be most dominant in his study population and subsequently monitored the intensity of roding by the remaining radio-tagged individuals. He found that for two days following the removal of the dominant males the general intensity of roding was reduced, but then previously sub-dominant males started to rode for longer and within seven days the intensity of roding was back to its original level. When one of the original dominant birds was returned to the population, the level increased still further (Hirons 1983).

The female remains on the ground near clearings or rides and probably calls the male down. She often runs in circles, displaying the brilliant white tips of her tail, before allowing the male to copulate. Occasionally, the pair may make short low-level flights together. The pair bond usually lasts for only three or four days, during which time the male does not rode but follows the female closely. The male then resumes roding and does not revisit the female (Hirons 1980). It has also been shown that dominant males may fertilise up to four females in a season (Hirons 1980). The mating system of the Woodcock is generally now referred to as one of successive polygyny.

The age of first breeding by females has been reported as 12 months (Ostermeyer & Ferrand 1979; Hirons 1980), but it is not clear whether all females or only a proportion breed at this age. The gonads of first-year males are well developed by February-March (Stronach 1983), but the proportion of first-year males roding in a particular area seems to depend on the number of older males present. In Britain, only a small proportion of first-year males are thought to rode (Hirons 1980), whereas in countries such as Sweden, where older males are removed by spring shooting, up to 50% of roding males may be first-years (Marcström 1988).

Recaptures and recoveries of ringed birds indicate that a high proportion of breeding adults return to the same breeding site in subsequent years (Hoodless 1994).



Plate 203. Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, Norfolk, March 1986 (Roger Tidman)



Plate 204. Concealed Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* on nest in snow, Nottinghamshire, March 1974 (J. Ellis). The bird's eye is dead centre in photograph, just to the right of the bole of the tree, with the bill pointing towards the right.

Breeding season and productivity

The breeding season in Britain is generally considered to extend from early March to mid July. Two of the earliest recorded instances of roding in Britain or Ireland were on 3rd February in West Sussex (des Forges 1975) and on 15th February in Surrey (Raynsford 1959). I reckon to see roding Woodcocks in Hampshire and Dorset by about 20th February. Roding activity usually peaks in mid May and ceases by mid July. The earliest Woodcock clutch found in Britain was on 2nd March (Vesey-Fitzgerald 1946), although the nest observed by des Forges (1975) was probably completed on 2nd March. The latest clutch was found on 9th September (Savage in Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* 1977). In Denmark, 43% of clutches were found prior to 7th April in years when the mean March temperature was 0.5°C or more above average and only 13% were found before 7th April when the mean March temperature was 0.5°C or more below average (Clausager 1973b).

The mean first-egg date from all BTO nest record cards up to 1989 was 18th April, but egg-laying commenced significantly later in the north of England (17th April) than in central and southern England (13th April) and was later still in Scotland (24th April) (Hoodless 1994). It may initially seem odd that the peak of roding activity is later than the main period of nesting, but this is probably because the dominant males quickly find mates during March and April, whereas in May and June, when most females have nests or young, they have to rode for longer before finding a receptive female.

The nest is little more than a flat hollow, measuring 13-15 cm in diameter, usually lined with dead leaves or dry grass. The clutch generally consists of three or four eggs, exceptionally two or five, and the mean clutch size from nest record cards is 3.9 eggs (Hoodless 1994). The eggs are usually laid on consecutive days or, less frequently, on alternate days. The incubation period ranges from 17 to 24 days, the average being 22 days. The female alone is responsible for incubation and the caring of the young (Shorten 1974; Hirons 1980).

During a prolonged watch of a Woodcock nest, des Forges (1975) found that the female left her nest on average four times a day during daylight hours, at intervals of about 2½ hours. The periods of absence lasted for 14-40 minutes. During the two days immediately preceding hatching, the absences were less frequent, with the female leaving the nest only twice a day. Woodcocks do not usually leave the nest at night. Time off the nest is spent feeding, and des Forges found that the female usually walked to her feeding area, which was never more than 30 m from the nest. Occasionally she walked only a few metres from the nest and then flew to her feeding ground.

Nest record cards have revealed that only 44% of nests survive from the day the first egg is laid until hatching, whilst in my intensive study at Whitwell Wood the proportion was 50%. Many Woodcocks will, however, re-nest after the loss of a clutch, but probably attempt to do so only once. Occasionally, the female will re-nest in the vicinity of the first nest, but usually she leaves the wood and selects another site up to 10 km away (Hirons 1983). Assuming that each female can make two nesting attempts, but that each will raise only a single brood per year, I have estimated that 65-71% of the females alive in mid April produce a brood of chicks.

Desertion is the cause of almost as many nest losses as predation, and previous authors have noted that the Woodcock seems particularly prone to desert its clutch (Shorten 1974; Kalchreuter 1983; Nethersole-Thompson & Nethersole-Thompson 1986). Desertion is often the result of accidental flushing of sitting birds by walkers and dogs or disturbance caused by forestry activities. Inevitably, in some cases, however, apparent desertion is due to predation of the female away from the nest, and Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* and Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* are known to kill adult Woodcocks. The main egg predators are Eurasian Jays *Garrulus glandarius* and Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*, although Wood Mice *Apodemus sylvaticus*, Grey Squirrels *Sciurus carolinensis* and Hedgehogs *Erinaceus europaeus* will also occasionally take Woodcock eggs. Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes* and Stoats *Mustela erminea* are important nest predators, usually taking both the female and the eggs.

Egg fertility is high and, excluding eggs which are taken by predators during incubation, an average of only 7% are addled or are damaged by the parent bird. The chicks weigh 16-20 g at hatching and their bills are about 17 mm long (Marcström & Sundgren 1977; Hoodless 1994). They remain in the nest cup for only two to three hours before being led away by the female. The chicks remain in contact with the female by means of short, shrill calls, but she generally makes no attempt to feed them. Varga (1968) saw a female turning over leaves for the chicks, and Workman (1954) saw an adult feeding a chick bill to bill, but these observations are probably exceptional. Wilson (in Cramp & Simmons 1983) followed the movements of 14 broods, but never saw the female help the chicks to feed, and this was the case with the few broods that I observed during the period shortly after hatching. Woodcock broods do not generally wander so far as those of other waders (Nethersole-Thompson & Nethersole-Thompson 1986) and often remain within 250 m of the nest during their first ten days.

In the event of danger, the female performs an impressive distraction display, flying away from the chicks with laboured wing-beats and a depressed tail (Lowe 1972). She then circles the potential predator at a distance of about 20 m and will occasionally drop to the ground and feign a broken wing. Much has been written about Woodcocks carrying their young, a subject of considerable controversy. In some instances, observers have clearly mistaken the laboured distraction display for the female carrying a chick. Nevertheless, there are now several records from observers who have managed to follow the female to the point where she drops and have then found a chick (Alexander 1946; Nethersole-Thompson & Nethersole-Thompson 1986). It must be concluded that Woodcocks will occasionally carry their young, but do not do so in every instance when they are disturbed.

The chicks are able to fly after 20 days (Hirons 1983), by which time they weigh 130-160 g (about 50% of the adult weight) and their bills are about 45 mm long. They become independent of the female shortly afterwards, but are not fully grown for at least another 20 days. Mean chick survival until fledging at Whitwell Wood was 45%, but the rate of chick mortality varied greatly from year to year (Hoodless 1994). During the summers of 1989 and 1990, which experienced average rainfall, 60% of chicks survived to fledging, whereas during the very dry summers of 1991 and 1992 only 32% of chicks fledged. The reason for the poor chick survival in years with dry summers is thought to be that

earthworms are less available. Hirons (1988b) found that in northern England there was a correlation between the ratio of adult to young Woodcocks shot by hunters in winter and the amount of rainfall the previous summer.

It has been suggested that the Woodcock is double-brooded (Alexander 1946; Clausager 1973b), but there are only two proven instances of this, where Woodcocks incubating eggs were seen surrounded by a brood of chicks (von Zedlitz 1927; Jensen in Pay 1937). It is possible that the prevalence of double-brooding might vary regionally and seasonally according to the prevailing weather (Kalchreuter 1983). Further information from a marked population, preferably containing radio-tagged individuals, is required before any firm conclusion can be drawn.

Diet, winter behaviour and mortality

Woodcocks take their food from the ground surface, from under leaf litter and by probing. They eat a wide range of invertebrates, including earthworms, adult and larval beetles, caterpillars, sawfly larvae, spiders and harvestmen, ants, millipedes, woodlice, earwigs, fly larvae and small snails. Vegetable matter generally comprises only a small component of the diet and consists of seeds of buttercups (*Ranunculaceae*), spurge (*Euphorbiaceae*), sedges (*Cyperaceae*), peas (*Leguminosae*) and grasses (*Gramineae*) (Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* 1977). Kiss *et al.* (1988) found vegetable matter in Woodcock stomachs in autumn, winter and spring, but the proportion relative to animal matter was highest in spring. There appears to be great regional variation in the relative proportions of invertebrate prey items, but, when the ground is soft enough to allow probing, the proportion of adult beetles, earwigs and millipedes tends to decrease in favour of earthworms (Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* 1977). In spring and summer in northern England and Scotland, earthworms, spiders, millipedes and woodlice are the groups taken most frequently by both adult Woodcocks and chicks. Adults, however, also select beetle larvae more often than expected from their availability, whilst chicks exhibit a particular preference for spiders (Hoodless 1994). The greatest variety of prey items is taken during autumn migration. In mild winter conditions, earthworms and leatherjackets (*Diptera* larvae) are by far the most important components of the diet (Hirons & Bickford-Smith 1983; Granval 1988).

During the breeding season, Woodcocks feed in woodland by day and remain in cover to roost at night. In autumn, however, their behaviour changes, and throughout the winter and early spring Woodcocks are nocturnal and leave the woodland at dusk to feed on nearby fields. They return to cover approximately half an hour before dawn (Hirons & Bickford-Smith 1983) and roost during the day. It is thought that this change occurs because invertebrate food becomes relatively more available in fields in the winter (Hirons & Owen 1982). It may, however, also be due in part to the fact that Woodcocks foraging in open, mainly leafless woodland by day would be especially vulnerable to avian predators, which

FACING PAGE

Plates 205-207. Woodcocks *Scolopax rusticola* on nests. Top, Norfolk, April 1985 (Roger Tidman); centre, with eggs, Nottinghamshire, May 1991 (J. Ellis); bottom, with chick, Nottinghamshire, June 1992 (Gerald M. Hall)



are known to constitute an important threat in the breeding season, when there is more cover than in winter (Hirons & Johnson 1987).

The Woodcocks select permanent pastures and grass leys in preference to plough or fields of winter cereals (Ferrand & Gossmann 1988; Hoodless 1994), even in areas where the proportion of grass fields is very low (Hirons 1983). In grass-dominated farmland, they feed on the permanent pastures with the highest densities of soil invertebrates, and the same individuals often return to the same field each night for up to a month (Hoodless 1994). During cold spells when Woodcocks are unable to feed at night, they will often frequent streams during the day (Hirons & Bickford-Smith 1983), although I have seen them on fields at night even when the ground was frozen.

On the basis of the mean Woodcock hunting bags per county during a mild winter (1979/80) and a cold winter (1980/81), Tapper & Hirons (1983) have suggested that there is a redistribution of Woodcocks within Britain during cold winters. If this is the case, it probably involves only the Continental migrants, as there is no evidence from ringing recoveries that British Woodcocks move farther from their natal or breeding sites in cold winters or cold spells within winters (Hoodless & Coulson 1994). It seems plausible that the resident and the migrant Woodcocks might follow different strategies in cold weather, since the resident birds will probably benefit from remaining in the same place owing to familiarity with the site, but the migrants have little to lose by moving and may have a better chance of finding an unfrozen feeding area elsewhere.

Woodcocks can generally withstand four or five days of freezing conditions, but they are believed to experience higher mortality in exceptionally cold winters owing to all of their feeding sites becoming frozen (Baillie *et al.* 1986; Marchant *et al.* 1990). During the severe winter of 1962/63, unusually large numbers of Woodcocks were concentrated in the southern and western counties of England and Wales and significant numbers were among the many dead birds reported (Ash 1964; Dobinson & Richards 1964). There is no direct evidence that more Woodcocks move to Britain from the Continent in cold winters, but there is a suggestion of this from increased numbers of sightings of Woodcocks on the coast (Dobinson & Richards 1964; Marchant 1982; Cramp & Simmons 1983).

The annual adult survival rate of British Woodcocks has been calculated from 342 ringing recoveries as 58%, while first-year survival has been estimated from 426 recoveries as 47% (Hoodless & Coulson 1994). The main natural predators of adult Woodcocks are Eurasian Sparrowhawks, Tawny Owls, Red Foxes and Stoats, although Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis*, Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus*, Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* and Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* are also known to take them (Nethersole-Thompson & Nethersole-Thompson 1986). Woodcocks found dead have generally flown into wire fences or overhead cables, or collided with vehicles.

Status and population pressures

The state of the British breeding Woodcock population is very difficult to assess because there is no simple way to census the species. Woodcock nests are notoriously difficult to find and, although counts can be made of roding males, these are of questionable value because of the species' polygynous mating system

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SATURDAY 6TH & SUNDAY 7TH WWT MARTIN MERE, ORMSKIRK	LANCASHIRE
SUNDAY 7TH PENNINGTON FLASH	GREATER MANCHESTER
SATURDAY 13TH BIG WATERS	NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE
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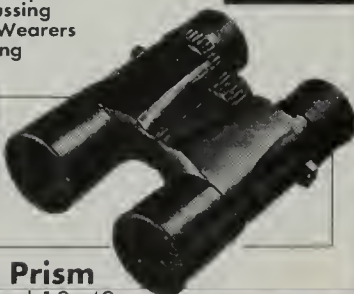
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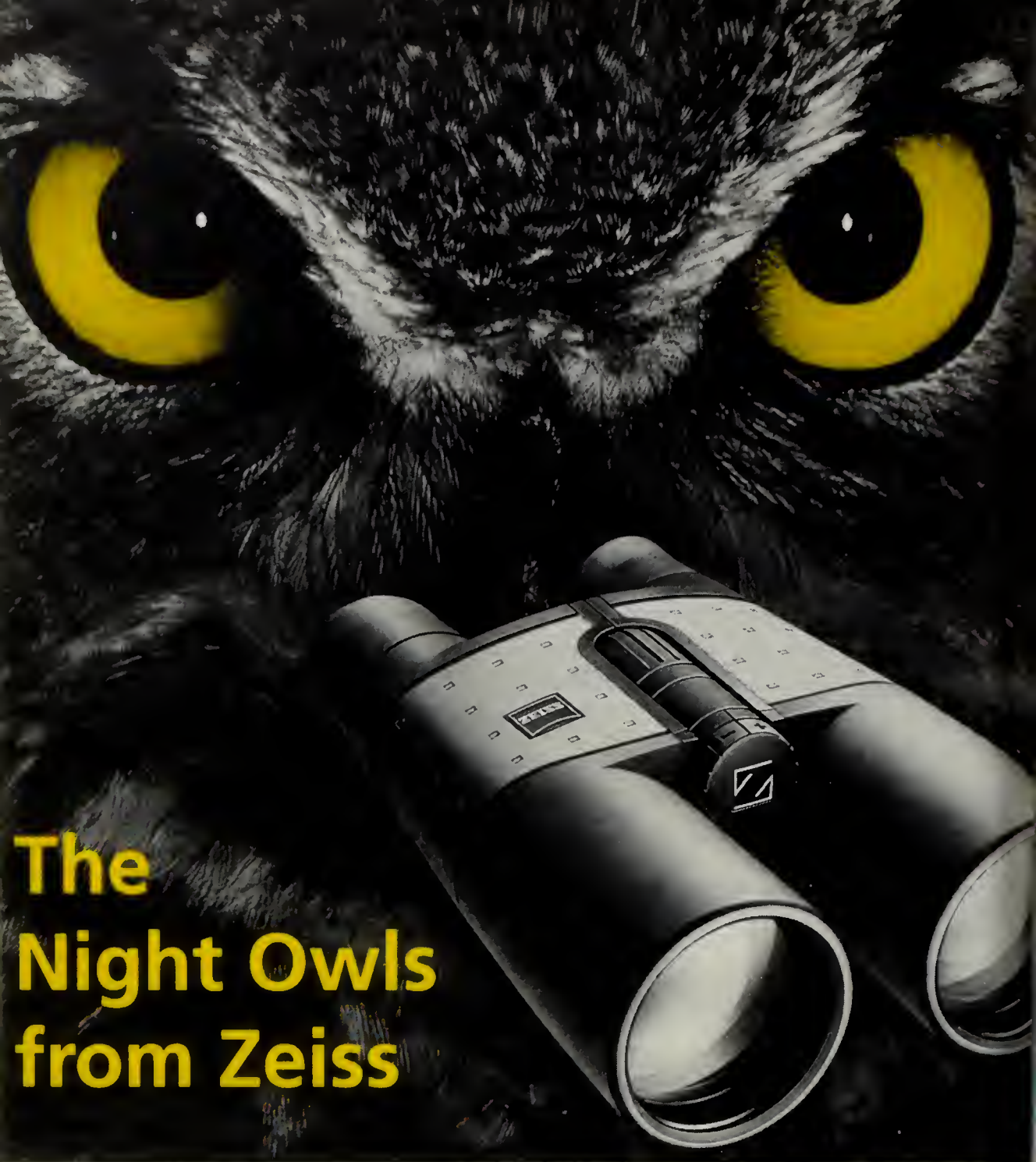
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and the fact that only a proportion of the males rode. The BTO's Common Birds Census (CBC) index suggests a progressive decline in the British Woodcock population, which has become steeper since 1980 (Marchant *et al.* 1990). The CBC is, however, not particularly suited to crepuscular species such as the Woodcock which do not hold breeding territories, and it is not clear how reliably the CBC monitors the Woodcock population. In addition, the CBC data are biased towards southern England and it is now clear that Woodcocks are more numerous and have fewer gaps in their breeding distribution in northern England and Scotland (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Nevertheless, the difference in the records of breeding Woodcocks between the BTO breeding-bird surveys of 1968-72 (Sharrock 1976) and 1988-91 (Gibbons *et al.* 1993) clearly points to a reduction in the size of the British breeding Woodcock population.

Woodcocks are still highly prized by sportsmen, who can legally shoot them between 1st October (1st September in Scotland) and 31st January. The impact of hunting on the Woodcock is very difficult to assess, but it is likely that shooting claims only a small proportion of the total overwintering population. There was no significant difference between the annual adult survival rates of ringed individuals that were shot and that were found dead (Hoodless & Coulson 1994), and recent evidence suggests that there has been a decline in hunting pressure on Woodcocks in Britain and Ireland, together with most other European countries, since the 1960s (Henderson *et al.* 1993). Hunting statistics provide an indication of changes in the numbers of wintering Woodcocks from year to year, but yield no information on the British breeding population because of the large influx of Continental migrants. Game Conservancy Trust figures suggest that the size of the wintering population has remained relatively constant since 1960 (Tapper 1992).

Forestry practice in Britain clearly affects the Woodcock population by altering the amount and type of habitat available to the species. Habitat loss is caused by the closing of forest canopies, conversion of mixed stands to pure conifer stands and clear-felling. In the south of England, there has been a net loss of woodland and covert since the 1930s owing to the felling and fragmentation of old woodlands and the dissolution of former sporting estates (Marchant *et al.* 1990). There has also been an 82% decline in managed coppice in Britain since 1950 (Warren & Key 1991). These losses may have been offset to some extent by the creation of large areas of new conifer forests during the 1950s and 1960s mentioned earlier. Information is still required, however, on the extent to which conifer plantations of different ages and different species composition are used by breeding Woodcocks.

Because Woodcocks feed primarily on farmland in the winter and early spring, their fortunes may fluctuate in relation to changes in agricultural practice. The single factor most likely to account for the widespread decline in the number of resident Woodcocks is probably the large-scale conversion of pasture to tillage in Britain since the 1950s. There has also been a vast increase in the range and quantity of pesticides applied to farmland, and the effects of some of these chemicals on the soil-invertebrate food of birds are still poorly known. It has been shown recently that some molluscicides and fungicides are directly poisonous to earthworms and some other classes of soil invertebrates (Wiltshire & Glen 1989). The cattle anthelmintic *Ivermectin* has also caused concern because it inhibits the

larval development of certain Diptera and dung-beetles (*Aphodius*) (Madsen *et al.* 1990). Earthworms are known to adsorb pesticide residues readily, and Woodcocks may therefore be contaminated by accumulation of these residues. Such an effect was demonstrated in the case of the American Woodcock during the early 1960s, which accumulated lethal doses of heptachlor epoxide that was applied in the Gulf States to control the imported Fire Ant *Solenopsis saevissima* (Stickel *et al.* 1965a, b). Another potential problem is the recent occurrence of the New Zealand flatworm *Artioposthia triangulata* in some parts of Britain and Ireland. This flatworm feeds upon earthworms, and the Woodcock is one of many birds and mammals likely to be affected adversely if the flatworm becomes established widely and abundantly in the soil here (Hancocks 1995).

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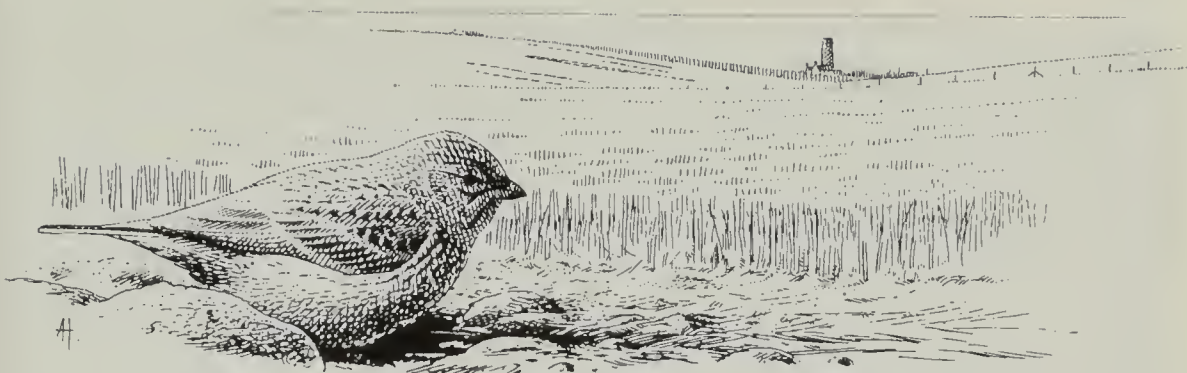


LOOKING BACK

'Woodcock, *Scolopax rusticola*. The woodcock arrives here [Durham and Cleveland] about the 15th of October, but does not remain with us, proceeding to the larger woods further inland. The greater number of these birds come with a north-east wind during the full moon, in the latter end of October, which, with us, is called the "hunter's moon." Once only I remember to have seen a woodcock on its direct passage; its flight was then high, and very swift, perfectly different from its usual owl-like mode of flying when disturbed in cover.'

'It is easy to know whether there are any woodcocks in a wood by seeking for a spring or marshy spot, and looking round these for its excrements, which are large, white and inodorous.' (*The Zoologist* 3: 1173-1174, 1187-1188, December 1845)

Twenty-five years ago, on 16th December 1970, Grahame Walbridge set out to walk the 3 km from his home at Weston, Portland, Dorset, to the bird observatory at Portland Bill. His journey was interrupted by his discovery of 'an amber-coloured *Sylvia* warbler', which proved to be not only a new species for Britain & Ireland, but also only the third record for Western Europe. Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*, for that is what it proved to be, was a completely unexpected vagrant in those days, though another nine have occurred here since (*Brit. Birds* 65: 460-464; 66: 356, 357; *Ibis* 116: 578).



Lesser Short-toed Lark in Dorset: new to Britain

I. R. Dickie and K. E. Vinicombe

During the morning of 2nd May 1992, IRD left the bird observatory at Portland Bill, Dorset, to search the 'Top Fields' for migrants. He was accompanied by a Young Ornithologists' Club group, of which he was an assistant leader. At about 10.10 GMT, he noticed a small, pale passerine as it flew away over a large barley field in the dry limestone valley opposite the observatory. He followed it through binoculars but moved on after failing to relocate it with a telescope during five minutes of scanning. At 17.40, he returned to the field with the YOC group while the leaders, Anna Hughes and Charles Wilkins, prepared dinner. The odd bird again flew out from near the path. This time, it settled some 40 m away and was viewable on the ground. It was clearly a small, pale lark.

IRD returned to the observatory to report his find and began discussing the identity of the lark with Martin Cade, the assistant warden. Quite sensibly, MC suggested that it might be a pale Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*. IRD could not accept this, although he was unable to suggest a conclusive alternative. A number of other birders in the lounge eavesdropped on the conversation, but no-one showed any real interest. IRD returned to the field and, a short while later, was joined by AH, whose first impression was that it was a Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*. At this stage, however, it was first heard to call, and its small size also became apparent when it was compared directly with a Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*. AH immediately ordered the fastest YOC member to run back to the observatory, where the incumbents at last erupted from their semi-somnambulant state and were soon running breathlessly up the hill. CW, who was already on his way, was the first to suggest that it might be a Lesser Short-toed Lark *C. rufescens*.

Pretty soon, there were some 20 observers gathered on the track, including S. J. Broyd, MC, R. & S. Hibbett, R. Newton, I. Pembroke, R. J. Senior, R. Taylor and KEV. The bird was feeding at a range of perhaps 40-50 m but slightly against the light. After a quick binocular view, KEV pronounced it a Short-toed Lark. Once in the telescopes, however, it soon became apparent that it was 'wrong' for that species. Most obviously, it had a clearly streaked breast band, a small bill, and a crested effect, while it lacked both a prominent supercilium and

a strong median-covert bar. Unaware of CW's earlier suggestion, we excitedly began to discuss the realistic possibility that it was a Lesser Short-toed Lark and we edged closer in an attempt to see the all-important primary projection. Inevitably, we flushed it across the field, but it called loudly twice, and those of us who were familiar with the call became convinced that it was indeed a Lesser. As it flew, E. T. Welland arrived from the opposite direction, having been told that there was a 'funny lark' in Top Fields. He was also familiar with both species abroad, and he quite independently recognised the call as being that of Lesser Short-toed and was confident enough to suggest this identification to SJB.

The bird settled on the path, near where it had originally been flushed. Despite close views (down to 30 m), it was still not possible to see the primaries as the lark grovelled in a small hollow or frustratingly contrived to keep them hidden behind vegetation. Eventually, it flew again and proved to be rather flighty until it settled on an area of bare earth in the northeast corner of the field. There it gave excellent prolonged, unobscured views at about 30 m, and at this point we could all clearly see that it had a good 'half-inch' (1.3-cm) primary projection. Around this time, we were joined by several local observers who had been summoned by a frantic telephone call. These included P. A. Coe, P. Kent, K. Pritchard, I. Prophet and D. & G. Walbridge. The lark was kept under observation until about 20.15, when it flew over to the far side of the field. By this time, it had been seen by perhaps 30 observers, several of whom were very familiar with the species in Spain, the Canary Islands, North Africa or the Middle East, and others with the eastern forms in China.

The following dawn saw a crowd of some 400 observers gathered, but, disappointingly, the bird had gone. Some confusion ensued over the identification of a Sky Lark and, a few days later, MC received an anonymous and abusive telephone call saying that our bird had been a 'runt Sky Lark'. Following the publication of a preliminary account of the observation (Dickie 1992), KEV received a long telephone call from Lee Evans informing him that the word was out on the grapevine that the bird had indeed been a runt Sky Lark. This was a portent of things to come. Two descriptions by IRD and KEV were submitted to the British Birds Rarities Committee, but assessment was protracted since one member 'pended' the record on the grounds that he considered (a) that it was full of anomalies, (b) that several of the features indicated Short-toed Lark and (c) that the descriptions did not eliminate Oriental Lark *A. gulgula*. As all records with eight or nine 'accept' votes are automatically reconsidered by the entire committee, the original descriptions were recirculated, along with further independent ones from SJB, MC and ETW, as well as with additional notes from GW added to the file in his capacity as a BBRC member. On the second circulation, the lone non-accepting member retained the file for almost a year before returning it to the Chairman with a further 'pend' vote. It then resumed its journey around the Committee, but was lost in the post halfway through this second circulation. The file was reconstructed and the record was swiftly accepted unanimously on the third circulation, the 'blocking member' by then having retired. A request from that member to be allowed to continue to take part in the assessment of the record, even after having left the Committee, was declined, but all ten accepting members were aware of the circumstances and of the arguments which the dissenting but now absent member had put forward. Subsequently, the Portland occurrence was

accepted unanimously as the first British record in a single circulation of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee*, the members of which, as is usual, saw not only the documentary evidence, but also all the BBRC comments and correspondence. The species was, of course, already in Category A of the British & Irish List by virtue of some previous records in Ireland (see below). The following is a synopsis of the five submitted descriptions and GW's BBRC comments.

Description

In general appearance and structure, it was a small, evenly proportioned, compact *Calandrella* lark, rather short-tailed and similar in size to Short-toed Lark. It often appeared somewhat finch-like because of its small, stubby bill and MC stated that, at first glance, it reminded him of a Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*, an effect heightened by its bill. SJB considered it 'noticeably smaller' than nearby Sky Larks, while ETW noted that it was 'much smaller' than a Sky Lark which he had flushed on his approach. In his initial views, IRD considered it to be slightly shorter than a Whinchat in direct comparison. When feeding, it crept quietly but busily along the ground, sometimes in a low, shuffling manner. The back was rounded and it sometimes appeared hunched, but it was longer-necked and more upright when alert. Initially, the wings were held relaxed, with the primaries drooping below the level of the tail, but later, when more active and alert, they were held on a level with the top of the tail. When disturbed, it would often creep away rather than fly. When flushed, it flew fast and direct, low over the ground in typical *Calandrella* manner, and it would drop straight to the ground from full flight, with no hovering. It was basically pale sandy-brown in appearance, considerably paler than Sky Lark, and GW considered it to be a fawner or greyer shade of brown than the greyer-type Short-toed Larks which he has seen. In flight, it looked quite strikingly pale and sandy, an effect heightened by the very pale belly and underwing. It showed a darker tail, with contrasting pale outer tail feathers, but it lacked a pale or white trailing edge to the wing.

The following more-detailed notes expand on the above:

HEAD Short-toed Lark has a head shape and pattern rather reminiscent of female House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, with a largish bill, a usually rounded crown, a fairly prominent supercilium and a dark line behind the eye. This bird failed to give this impression. Its head usually looked less rounded than that of Short-toed, with a somewhat steeper forehead. It quite often showed a crested effect, with a sharp angle at the crown/nape juncture, this often being caused by the wind catching the rear crown feathers; they were more typically laid flat when feeding in sheltered conditions. It is important to note that the raised crown feathers did not impart such an obviously crested appearance as on Sky Lark. Compared with Short-toed, it had a rather plain-faced appearance within which the dark eye stood out. The crown was evenly and finely streaked

brown on a sandy-brown background, perhaps recalling Sky Lark. The buffy supercilium was narrow and faint and blended well with the rest of the head. There was only a narrow inconspicuous dark line behind the eye. The eye itself was surrounded by an obvious pale creamy-buff ring which merged with the lores and supercilium around the front of the eye. The most distinctive facial character was a narrow, but quite noticeable, brown line which extended back from the bottom of the lower mandible, curving upwards below the lores and ending approximately level with the rear of the eye, thus forming the lower border to the pale eye-surround. Ear-coverts plain and variously described as light sandy or buffish-white. Indistinct dark moustachial stripe merged into dark ear-covert surround (comprised more of streaks than a solid area of colour) which

*Although a member of that Committee, KEV did not vote on the record.

curved up to meet narrow dark eye-stripe, thus giving complete border to ear-coverts. To KEV, whole facial pattern was characteristic of Lesser Short-toed Lark. GW thought that nape was contrastingly paler and unstreaked, but IRD described it as sandy with dark flecks visible only during the best views.

UNDERPARTS Throat and lower neck pale buffish-white. Across the breast was a noticeable pectoral band of profuse, even, fine streaking, the general impression recalling Sky Lark. The band was less deep in the middle, but was continuous right across the breast. At the sides, the streaking became more organised and more heavily lined. The streaking was delicate, profuse and unlike the more random streaking shown by some Short-toed Larks. It failed to show even a hint of dark patches on the breast sides. Underparts variously described as 'pale with a sandy wash', 'pale buff' or 'sandy-grey'. In hindsight, KEV thought them buffer and less white than on most Short-toeds, while GW also considered them buffer than on that species. Flanks faintly streaked.

UPPERPARTS Pale sandy-brown with distinct greyish cast, heavily streaked dark brown (perhaps heaviest on lower mantle). Two heavy blackish streaks down scapulars, these feathers overhanging innermost wing-coverts. Lower back, rump, uppertail-coverts and closed tail sandy with light greyish cast.

WINGS Median coverts, greater coverts and tertials brown, noticeably edged buff. Lacked the obvious dark median-covert bar shown by most Short-toed Larks (which recalls that of Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*), because centres of median coverts were brown—not dark brown or black—and did not coalesce to form a bar; in fact, individual feathers could be picked out because of their broad, light buffy-brown fringes. Lesser coverts appeared basically sandy-grey, while primary coverts were noticeably blacker than other wing-coverts. IRD noted secondaries and primaries as being slightly paler than rest of upperparts, forming paler wedge back from the alula, under the tertials. MC noted underwing as pale, 'perhaps dirty whitish'.

PRIMARY PROJECTION This was obviously the key feature and the one that caused us the most frustration. At any distance, it was very difficult to determine where the tertials ended and where the primaries began and the evaluation of this was hampered by the lark frequently moving through the newly sprouting barley. At closer ranges, it frustratingly managed to conceal this vital part of its anatomy behind vegetation or in hollows.

On many occasions, we were 95% certain that we could see a primary projection, but it took us a good three-quarters of an hour to see it well enough to be 100% certain. The problem was caused by the fact that the primaries themselves were very faded, sandy-brown, and so appeared more-or-less concolorous with the tertials. When seen well, however, it was possible to count down three tertials from the shortest uppermost to the longest lower one and a primary projection of about half an inch (1.3 cm) was clearly visible beyond the lowest tertial. MC considered that the exposed primaries were approximately equal to half the length of the overlying tertials. In a close, semi-back-on view, the primary projection was in fact obvious. Viewing through a 50× *Questar* telescope at 30 m, SJB was able to count three visible primary tips with the space between the tips of the second and third being greatest. RH, GW and ETW were also able to view the primaries through the *Questar*. There was no question of the bird lacking the covering tertials. Although the tertials were also worn (particularly the longest), it was nevertheless quite easy to count them and to see their pale buffy edges. The primary projection was clearly visible on both wings.

BARE PARTS *Bill* Very distinctive: noticeably small and pointed, and much less conspicuous than the more sparrow-like bill of Short-toed Lark. Structurally similar to that of a Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*, but with the mandibles convex, not concave (IRD). Quite conical, with straighter mandibles than Short-toed, more like Linnet's in both shape and proportions (KEV). Small and somewhat stubby, on occasions giving the head a small finch-like appearance; when concentrating on the head, it was the small bill which always stood out (SJB). In colour, it had a dark tip and a greyer base (described by MC as 'grey-horn'). *Legs* Quite noticeably orange or fleshy-orange.

CALL Clearly and loudly heard on three occasions, less clearly on others. It fitted exactly KEV's memory of the call of Lesser Short-toed Lark, which he had last heard in Morocco in 1990. Immediately after it called the first time, he wrote it down as: 'a rapid, almost buzzing "ddddd", sounding like four notes concertinaed together'. He added that 'this call was obviously different from the more usual calls of Short-toed Lark', which, in his most recent notes, he had noted as a hard 't-trip trip', 'chip chip' or as a 'hard chirruping'. The call was, in fact, difficult to describe and this accounted for a variety of transcriptions by the various observers. SJB described it as a 'distinctive,

buzzy "chrrr", given several times as the bird flew from one spot to another'. ETW considered it 'a loud buzzing churring note', quite dissimilar to the 'hard chirrupy call' which he associates with Short-toed Lark. GW variously transcribed it as 'dddr', 'tttr', 'trrr' or 'drrr' and as 'a rasping dry rattle, very distinctive and quite different from Short-toed,

being lower in pitch and louder'. MC described it as a short, dry, quite buzzing 'dddr'. As an interesting postscript, MC again encountered the species in southern Morocco in November 1992 and he first detected and correctly identified the birds by 'the dry, buzzing call identical to that heard from the Portland bird'.

Identification

The separation of Short-toed and Lesser Short-toed Larks has been covered by Dennis & Wallace (1975) and summarised by Alström *et al.* (1991). Despite their superficial similarity, the two species are not difficult to identify, given a reasonable view, and there is a feeling amongst those who know them that there has been a tendency to overstress their similarities, rather than their differences. Lesser Short-toed has something of the character of a 'miniature Sky Lark', an impression which Short-toed never gives. Even those Short-toeds which show breast streaking are not a problem, since the streaking tends to be sparser and more 'random' than that shown by Lesser. Despite this, KEV took the opportunity to examine carefully some 50 Lesser Short-toed Larks (race *polatzeki*) on Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, on 19th April 1993. This was particularly useful as it was at the same time of year as the Portland bird (just 13 days earlier). Every individual had worn primaries and many had them equally as worn and faded as those on the Portland bird (at this time of year, these feathers are perhaps nine months old and have been subjected to a lot of strong sunlight). At a distance, every individual appeared to show concolorous primaries and tertials, but, at closer ranges, some less-faded individuals had slightly darker primaries. Their crests were raised very frequently and, as with the Portland bird, were often caught by the wind, but tended to be lowered when feeding. The call was also similar and he again noted it as 'a distinctive, rattling, dry "dddr"'. Interestingly, in flight, several of the larks on Fuerteventura showed a very narrow white trailing edge to the secondaries, a feature not apparently recorded previously.

Distribution, movements and habitats

Much of the following information is taken from *BWP*. Lesser Short-toed Lark frequents the mid-latitude steppe and semi-desert zones and, compared with Short-toed Lark, it exists on barer, poorer, drier, more saline, more clayey or more gravelly sites, although the habitat distinctions between the two are not totally clear-cut. It is normally a lowland species, but the Transcaucasian race *pseudobaetica* ascends to alpine meadows at 3,000 m.

The breeding distribution of Lesser Short-toed Lark extends from Spain, the Canaries and Morocco in the west, across North Africa to Turkey and the Middle East and through the southern parts of the former Soviet Union to Manchuria. In Spain, it is considered to be largely sedentary, while in North Africa it is resident to dispersive and perhaps nomadic. Farther east, it is more migratory, and breeders from the former Soviet Union withdraw mainly into the southern part of the breeding range in winter. Even in eastern Turkey, it is mainly a summer visitor. In the Far East, it moves southwards into northern parts of the Indian subcontinent and southern China.

Geographical variation

Lesser Short-toed Lark forms a superspecies with the Rufous Short-toed Lark *C. somalica* from east and northeast Africa and with the Indian Short-toed Lark *C. rayal* from the Indian subcontinent. In the Palearctic, there is marked and complex geographical variation involving mainly the ground colour of the upperparts, the width of the shaft streaks, the amount of white in the tail, size, and bill shape. *BWP* recognises ten races in the western Palearctic and an additional four to six in the east. The ranges of *heinei* and *leucophaea* overlap to the east of the Caspian Sea, apparently without interbreeding, so most authors now split *leucophaea* with the four to six other races from central and eastern Asia as the Asian Short-toed Lark *C. cheleensis*.

No attempt has been made to ascribe the Portland bird to any particular race. On the face of it, a southern origin from Spain (race *apetzii*) or from North Africa (race *minor*) would seem most likely. In this respect, it is interesting to note that MC found that the Lesser Short-toed Larks in southern Morocco in November 1992 were in all respects similar to the Portland bird. Given the relatively sedentary nature of the western populations, however, one should perhaps not rule out the possibility of vagrancy of one of the migratory eastern races, such as *heinei* from the steppes and semi-deserts of the southern parts of the former Soviet Union.

Previous European vagrancy

BWP mentions seven spring and four autumn records from Malta, but the species is surprisingly rare in northern Europe. The only other records from the British Isles involve a remarkable series of some 42 individuals in southern Ireland in 1956 and 1958 (*Irish Bird Report* 4: 15, 24; 6: 20, 30; *Brit. Birds* 53: 241-243). Alström *et al.* (1991) noted an old record from Heligoland, Germany, on 26th May 1879, and two more-recent ones from Finland in November 1962 and January-February 1975. Five recent records have been listed in the 'European news' reports in this journal: Falsterbo, Skåne, Sweden, on 27th-28th April 1986; Molen, Larvik, Vestfold, Norway, during 7th-23rd November 1987; Wauwilermoos/Lucerne, Switzerland, on 28th-29th April 1989; Hoburgen, Gotland, Sweden, on 10th-11th May 1991; and in Austria on 7th April 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 13; 81: 9; 85: 10; 88: 39). The Portland bird fits in with the recent pattern of spring occurrences, which have been mainly during 27th April to 10th May.

Summary

A Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* was seen by about 30 observers at Portland Bill, Dorset, on 2nd May 1992. It is described in detail and a summary is given of the species' range and geographical variation. Other records of European vagrancy are listed.

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K. E. Vinicombe, 11 Kemington Avenue, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 9EU

EDITORIAL COMMENT Rob Hume, Chairman of the BBRC, has commented: 'There have always been instances of rare birds disappearing overnight to leave a frustrated crowd of people with nothing to do but grumble the next day. With modern communication methods, there is inevitably more chance of a large crowd being drawn to see a "bird that never was"—something that has been misidentified, much to the embarrassment of the observers and the information network concerned—or a bigger crowd than before being disappointed if the bird has flown. Trying to assess the likelihood of either event before putting out news, by whatever means, is not easy. It is unfortunate that the second situation ("You should have been here yesterday") may lead to an assumption that the first is also true ("It was only a Sky Lark"); indeed, this may help to assuage disappointment. Rare-bird record assessment is sometimes as much about human nature as it is about bird identification.

'In this instance, however, an overwhelming case has been made for the identification of the small lark as Lesser Short-toed. Details of general impression, head pattern, bill shape, breast and wing markings, the relative tertial/primary lengths on the closed wing as confirmed by several observers, and the call, all add up to a firm identification which the present Committee accepts without question. The delay in the assessment process, which will be known to some readers—but, I suspect, is of little interest to many others—was unfortunate, particularly the loss of a substantial file in the post. To be fair to the Royal Mail, we lose very little in the post: it *would* have to be this one.'

Dr David T. Parkin, Chairman of the BOURC, has commented: 'The problems relating to the identification of this bird are well discussed by I. R. Dickie and Keith Vinicombe in the main article. Several very experienced observers saw the bird, and there can be no serious problems over its separation from possible confusion species. Size, plumage, primary projection and call are all documented. The objections raised by the single dissenting voice on the BBRC were discussed and dismissed by the BOURC, and the bird was accepted as a Lesser Short-toed Lark in a single circulation. As one of the finders of the bird and a member of the BOURC, Keith Vinicombe was excluded from commenting and voting.

'One member of the BOURC was among the throng who turned up the following day, and failed to see the bird. In the file, he has commented that: "I was unaware of anyone even claiming a runt Skylark—amazing how these stories arise and then spread." Another commented: "I confirm that KEV and others among the observers are widely held in very high regard. Collusion and fabrication are easily discounted in this case."

'There is no evidence of this species being involved in the current bird trade. Although there are records of importation in the past (London Zoo, pre-1929, *Avicultural Magazine* 64: 146), it is unlikely that western populations would be involved these days. The coincidence of date for records from several European countries is striking. The record has been accepted as the first for Britain (*Ibis* in press), although Lesser Short-toed Lark is already on the British & Irish List on the strength of the records from Ireland in 1956 and 1958 (*Ibis* 102: 629).'



NOTES

Large Kittiwake flock inland in Iceland

On 14th June 1972, near Krisuvík, Reykjanes peninsula, southwest Iceland, I observed a huge gathering of an estimated 30,000 Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* on lava-flow terrain about 6 km inland from the breeding cliffs. Close examination revealed the majority to be adults, with immatures comprising about 10%. Variable-sized groups moved periodically between this flocking area and the coast. The weather at the time was mild and cloudy.

Bryan Sage

Waveney House, Waveney Close, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk NR23 1HU

EDITORIAL COMMENT Gunnlaugur Pétursson (*in litt.*) has informed us that about 32,000 pairs of Kittiwakes breed on the sea cliffs south of Krisuvík, using the lake (Kleifarvatn) 2 km northeast of Krisuvík for bathing, with up to a few thousands being seen together during the breeding season at the lake or between it and the coast; '30,000 birds is probably an order of magnitude larger than usually seen together'.

Blackbird playing with and killing shrew

On 20th June 1994, as our father was driving us along a lane in Seaton, Devon, we saw a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* in the road. The Blackbird was playing with a tiny shrew *Sorex*, like a cat playing with a mouse; it finally killed the shrew and flew off with the mammal in its beak, perhaps to feed to its young. Our father remarked that he had never before seen a Blackbird behave in this way.

Tom Waite and Steven Waite

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Previous notes have recorded a male Blackbird beating and shaking a shrew, which it eventually carried off to a wood, and a female Blackbird killing and feeding to a juvenile a shrew, a House Mouse *Mus domesticus* and a fledgling House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (*Brit. Birds* 58: 439, 513). Such behaviour does, nevertheless, seem to be quite unusual.

Sombre Tit stringing food on thorn

On 6th July 1989, on Mount Hermon, Israel, I saw an adult Sombre Tit *Parus lugubris* with three fledglings. The adult was carrying a small worm, which it strung on a thorn of a hawthorn *Crataegus aronia*. One of the young approached the branch, took the worm off the thorn and swallowed it.

Yoav Perlman

Pinchas Rozen 7, Ramat Sharet, Jerusalem 96925, Israel

EDITORIAL COMMENT Perhaps the adult Sombre Tit accidentally spiked the worm when wiping its bill to remove slime.

Carrion Crows building wire nests

The note on Magpies *Pica pica* building nests of metal (*Brit. Birds* 84: 441-443) prompts the following. In the mid 1960s, in Caithness, the nest of a pair of Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* of the 'hooded' race *cornix*, placed some 45 m up on a meteorological tower, was constructed basically of pieces of strainer wire (plate 208).

David Stark

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EDITORIAL COMMENT The building of wire nests by crows and other species, especially pigeons and doves (Columbidae), is not new (see e.g. *Brit. Birds* 63: 36-37; 64: 77-80; *Scot. Birds* 18: 59), but we are glad to publish this photograph from some 30 years ago.



Plate 208. Nest of Carrion Crow *Corvus corone cornix*, composed mainly of wire, Caithness, 1960s (David Stark)



LETTERS

Naturalised birds: feral, exotic, introduced or alien?

The theme of the British Ornithologists' Union's 1995 Annual Conference (organised jointly with the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee) was 'Feral and Introduced Birds'. It became apparent from the papers presented at the Conference that a variety of terms such as 'exotic', 'introduced', 'alien' and 'feral' are currently used to describe species introduced by man to a particular location, either deliberately or through escape from captivity. These terms are often used interchangeably, leading to much confusion.

The meeting considered the meanings of these words to try to ensure a common understanding. Terms such as 'exotic', 'alien' and 'non-native' describe the *origins* of the species concerned, whereas 'feral', 'introduced' and 're-established' describe the *process* by which establishment in the wild has occurred. The consensus at the Conference was that 'naturalised' was a more appropriate all-encompassing term for such species, describing the *outcome* of the process.

A Dictionary of Birds (Campbell & Lack 1985) defines 'naturalised birds' as: 'species that have been introduced by human agency, direct or indirect, into areas where they either had not spread by natural means, or had become extinct, and that have successfully established themselves and are now breeding regularly as wild birds. Mere acclimatisation in captivity, or even casual escape of individuals is excluded from the definition.'

'Feral', which is often more widely used to describe such species, has a more limited definition:

'literally "wild", but applied only to populations of domesticated species that have reverted to a free existence.'

We assume here that mere keeping in captivity does not constitute domestication. A feral species would have to have undergone some change in genotype, phenotype or behaviour through domestication. Terms such as 'alien' and 'exotic' similarly have a more restricted meaning. Table 1 outlines the derivation of four terms to describe naturalised species. Note that the term 'naturalised' is accompanied by a qualifier explaining the origin of the species concerned.

Note also that the term 're-established' is favoured over 'reintroduced'. The latter is often used to describe species such as Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* which have been re-established in an area of former natural occurrence. This usage is incorrect, however, since reintroduction implies that the species was *introduced* in the first place.

Suggested terms:

NATURALISED FERAL Domesticated species gone wild. The feral pigeon (i.e. non-native Rock Dove) *Columba livia* is the only bird species in Britain which currently fits into this category, although Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* is a potential candidate since it is currently considered by the BOURC to be potentially self-sustaining (Vinicombe *et al.* 1993).

NATURALISED INTRODUCTION Established species which would not occur without introduction by man. This includes species such as Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* and Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*.

NATURALISED RE-ESTABLISHMENT A successful re-establishment of a species in areas of former occurrence (e.g. Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, Capercaillie).

NATURALISED ESTABLISHMENT Establishment of a species which occurs, but does not breed naturally (e.g., potentially, Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*).

Table 1. Derivation of terms to describe naturalised birds.

Origin	Process	Outcome	Term
Domestic	Feral	Naturalised	Naturalised feral
Non-domestic alien/Non-native/Exotic	Introduced		Naturalised introduction
Non-domestic naturally occurring	Re-established (Re-stocked)		Naturalised re-establishment
	Established (Stocked)		Naturalised establishment

Note that these terms are meaningless without some geographical reference. For example, the Greylag Goose is a naturalised re-establishment across much of Britain where it had previously become extinct as a breeding species. It could, however, be considered a naturalised establishment in certain areas (i.e. in areas where it had not formerly bred naturally), and it is also a native breeder in Caithness, Sutherland and the Hebrides.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS Many people contributed to the discussion of terminology at the 1995 BOU/JNCC Conference. In particular, the suggestions presented in this letter were developed by a small group consisting of the authors, Dr Colin Galbraith, Dr Humphrey Crick and Sir Christopher Lever.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT We shall welcome comments on these proposals concerning the use of standardised terminology to describe the status of naturalised birds.

Moult and ageing terminology

The paper by Suddaby *et al.* (1994) on the King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*, with particular reference to the sequence of plumages, was of special interest to me. In that paper, the 'documentation' for ageing and sexing King Eiders is given as Cramp & Simmons (1977) and Madge & Burn (1988). In addition, two pertinent papers are cited in the references: Ellis (1994) and Dawson (1994, erroneously given as *Brit. Birds* 86 rather than 87). The plumage descriptions in Suddaby *et al.* adhere closely to those of Ellis (1994).

The usage of nomenclature for age classes/plumages is utterly different in Cramp & Simmons, Madge & Burn and Ellis, and thus is confusing to a reader comparing these accounts. This emphasises the value of the Humphrey & Parkes (1959, hereafter H/P) terminology and its underlying concepts. In what follows, the H/P names are given initial capitals.

The fundamental concept underlying the H/P approach to the study of plumages is that of homology. Two kinds of homology are involved, and both are pertinent to Suddaby *et al.* (1994) and Ellis (1994). It is perhaps of historical interest to note that our 1959 paper was generated by a request from Ralph S. Palmer to compile the sections on plumages and moults for certain sea ducks for the *Handbook of North American Birds*. The plumage sequence of ducks is completely homologous to those of other birds, though that is obscured by the fact that the 'eclipse' plumage is worn in the summer, whereas its place in the plumage sequence is exactly homologous to the 'winter' or 'non-breeding' plumage of other birds. Furthermore, for the great majority of birds that have, as adults, two moults (thus two plumages) per year, there is a sequence of 'immature' plumages homologous to that of the definitive plumages of adults.

The confusion in plumage terminology is perpetuated by calling the Alternate Plumage of King Eiders the 'winter' plumage (Ellis 1994); it is the 'breeding' plumage in Cramp & Simmons (1977) and Madge & Burn (1988). This plumage is not homologous to what is often called the 'winter' plumage in other birds with a two-plumage cycle. Rather, the 'eclipse' (Madge & Burn) or 'non-breeding' (Cramp & Simmons) is homologous to the less-colourful 'winter' plumage of many other birds. Confusion of this kind was one of the rationales for the introduction of the H/P terminology, which is deliberately tied to neither the seasonal nor the reproductive cycle.

Ellis's 'post-juvenile' plumage of male King Eiders is the First Basic of H/P, homologous to the 'first adult non-breeding' of Cramp & Simmons, and to the 'first winter plumage' of Dwight (1900). This plumage moults into what Ellis confusingly calls the 'first-winter plumage' in the King Eider (i.e. the First Alternate plumage of Humphrey & Parkes). Suddaby *et al.* are wrong in stating that the 'post-juvenile' plumage 'is not shown by female eiders or other ducks'. For a description of the First Basic ('post-juvenile') plumage of female King Eiders, see Palmer (1976: 106). As for males of other ducks, the First Basic plumage is rudimentary and transitory in a few, for example Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, and long-lasting in others, such as Northern Shoveler *A. clypeata*.

Madge & Burn (1988: 16) presented a table attempting to equate the 'British' and 'American' (i.e. H/P) plumage terminologies. They are correct in equating British 'first-summer' with H/P 'First Alternate', and British 'adult breeding' with

H/P ‘Definitive Alternate’, but the first-summer/First Alternate plumage is the ‘first-winter’ plumage of Ellis.

The relative simplicity of the H/P terminology, and the homological concepts underlying it, appear to have been particularly confusing to British writers. One of the principal motivations for its introduction was to obviate the confusion nicely demonstrated by the case of the King Eider.

Kenneth C. Parkes
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EDITORIAL COMMENT As argued above, there are advantages in the Humphrey & Parkes terminology, particularly since it avoids problems regarding ‘winter’ and ‘summer’. The whole subject of plumages and moults is most elegantly and simply described in *BWP*. The conclusion reached there was that the *BWP* terminology seems ‘more straightforward and easier to understand’ than that of Humphrey & Parkes. We, however, prefer the even simpler terminology which we have used since 1985, and which, though not perfect, has been widely accepted for use within the Palearctic. We acknowledge that there may be a few occasions in the future, as should have been the case with King Eiders, when our terminology may require modification.

In order to remind our readers, and to aid the reading of the letter above, we are reprinting here the table that we originally published in 1985 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 426), comparing the *British Birds* terminology with those of *BWP* and Humphrey & Parkes (table 1).

Table 1. ‘British Birds’ plumage and moult terminology, showing ‘BWP’ and Humphrey & Parkes alternatives. The names of the moults are in italics.

‘British Birds’	‘BWP’	Humphrey & Parkes
Juvenile	Juvenile	Juvenal
<i>Moult to first-winter or post-juvenile moult</i>	<i>Post-juvenile moult</i>	<i>First prebasic moult</i>
First-winter	First immature non-breeding	First basic
<i>Moult to first-summer</i>	<i>First immature pre-breeding moult</i>	<i>First prealternate moult</i>
First-summer	First immature breeding	First alternate
<i>Moult to second-winter</i>	<i>First immature post-breeding moult</i>	<i>Second prebasic moult</i>
Second-winter	Second immature non-breeding	Second basic
<i>Moult to second-summer</i>	<i>Second immature pre-breeding moult</i>	<i>Second prealternate moult</i>
Second-summer	Second immature breeding	Second alternate
<i>Moult to adult winter or autumn moult</i>	<i>Adult post-breeding moult</i>	<i>Prebasic moult</i>
Adult winter	Adult non-breeding	Definitive basic
<i>Moult to adult summer or spring moult</i>	<i>Adult pre-breeding moult</i>	<i>Prealternate moult</i>
Adult summer	Adult breeding	Definitive alternate

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Pesticide poisoning of birds

In reply to 'Chemicals and the environment' (*Brit. Birds* 88: 247), I should like to alert readers to the existence of the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme (WIIS), which was set up in the wake of the persistent pesticide problems of the 1950-60s, to investigate the problems of pesticide poisoning to wildlife, including birds.

The Scheme relies on animals that are found dead or dying being reported by the public, so it is usually only the direct effects of pesticides which are investigated. With the exception of fish, all vertebrate wildlife, beneficial insects (honey-bees) and pets (companion animals) are included in the Scheme. After acceptance of an incident, a post-mortem examination is carried out, to assess the condition of the animal and identify any typical poisoning lesions. Incidents arising from disease, trauma and starvation are screened out. A field inquiry may be undertaken to gather as much information as possible concerning the cause of the incident. Relevant tissues from casualties are forwarded for residue analysis. The results are collated and interpreted to assess whether any residues detected contributed to the death or illness of the animal.

Incidents arising from the approved use of pesticides are reassuringly few in number and the results are fed back to the Regulatory authorities. Over the years, problems with the approved pesticides have been identified and, where necessary, changes of use, formulation or withdrawal of the pesticide have ensued. For example, incidents involving Brent Geese *Branta bernicla*, poisoned after grazing on winter wheat that had been sprayed with the insecticide triazophos, used to control yellow cereal fly, were identified by the Scheme. As all the incidents were found to occur in the new year, spraying was restricted to the period up to the end of December, when cereal grazing by the geese was minimal.

The majority of poisoning incidents arise from the abuse or misuse of pesticides. Abuse results from the deliberate, illegal attempts to poison animals, such as laying baits containing pesticides. Misuse includes the poor storage of pesticides, chemicals not being used in the approved manner (e.g. rodenticide baits being left uncovered) or compounds being disposed of in an inappropriate way. Unfortunately, birds of prey, including some of our rarest, feature high on the list of casualties.

There are various pieces of legislation, relating either to the chemicals (how they are used, stored, etc.) or to the protection of animals from poisoning. Where the Scheme finds that an incident has resulted from the abuse or misuse of a compound, the evidence so gathered may be used in court cases. Fines and subsequent costs may be substantial when a transgression is proven.

A long-term campaign against the illegal poisoning of animals has been initiated by Government departments, led by MAFF, and this has been supported by the

agricultural industry, product-users, animal-welfare groups, environmental bodies and others. The aims of the campaign are to educate perpetrators that their action is illegal; to make the public aware of the Scheme and that pesticide poisoning is occurring; to encourage respect for legal methods of controlling pests; and to encourage the public to report incidents through a freephone number (0800 321600).

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Bob Scott has commented: 'The WIIS is important and fulfils a useful function, but, as Mark Fletcher has stated, "only the direct effects of pesticides . . . are investigated." Currently, there is serious concern in several quarters about the indirect effects that may cause the "disease, trauma and starvation" that are screened out from the WIIS programme.

'We welcome the opportunity to publicise the work of the WIIS, but must wonder about the resources available to it. There are stories of delays in feedback of results and difficulty in getting some work undertaken. Increased funding, via MAFF or some other Government source, would be an extremely useful way to focus more attention on the pesticide issue.'

Vagrancy likelihood of the Welsh Monk Vulture

After having read Keith Vinicombe's paper on the Welsh Monk Vulture *Aegypius monachus* (*Brit. Birds* 87: 613-622), some comments on the status of this species in Spain perhaps may be useful regarding the British record.

There has been a large recovery in the Spanish population, evaluated in 1990 as 774 pairs in 27 colonies, ten of them containing fewer than five pairs (Gonzalez 1990). The species increased by about 52.7% from 1970's levels, colonising new areas within 30-40 km of established ones. Of 18 colonies, 13 increased, four were stable and only one showed a decrease. The population is still recovering, with 900-1,000 pairs in 1992 (Gonzalez 1994). On the other hand, the species remains rare outside its range, although it is being observed more often than it was formerly: in the period 1987-94, 16 extralimital records of the species have been published in the journal *Ardeola* (36: 242; 40: 92-93; 41: 196). Of those records, one was in January and the rest fell in the period 29th April to 29th August. The species has been recorded well out of its breeding range, even near the Atlantic coast in Asturias and Vizcaya and in Catalan Pyrénées near France, in company with Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* (X. Parellada *in litt.*), and a long-staying individual is known from the Ports de Tortosa mountains, Tarragona, from 1976 well into the 1980s (Ferrer *et al.* 1986). Additionally, a marked individual was seen in winter 1993/94 among Griffon Vultures in the Strait of Gibraltar area; it was one previously reintroduced in the French region of Grand Causses, where it was relocated in spring 1994 (SECONA 1995). Other large vultures have been found making large 'unexpected' movements (e.g. a transmitter-marked Griffon Vulture released in Jaca, Pyrénées, flew southwards as far as Valencia, flying a

maximum of 80 km per day and in total wandering about 2,000 km: Berthold *et al.* 1991), and another ringed on 19th August 1992 in Alava, Spain, was recovered in Ile Kuriale, Monastir, Tunisia, on 31st October 1992, 73 days after and 1,418 km from the initial point (Cantos & Gómez-Manzanque 1994), and, even more surprising, a Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* from the Alps reintroduction scheme was seen in 1994 near Calais, France, while diving in the sea, from where it was recovered by a fisherman (D. García Ferré *in litt.*). Thus, these large, thought-to-be-nearly-sedentary birds do in certain circumstances undertake large movements. It is totally possible, therefore, that the Welsh bird could have been a genuine vagrant. All Spanish captive birds are ringed. Whether it was a juvenile or an adult is of no significance to vagrancy potential of this species (it could be an adult having lost its breeding territory and wandering north), and it is not rare to see vultures flying with some of their feathers considerably damaged. Concerning sea-crossings, besides the already mentioned ringed bird travelling from Europe to Africa, the Tarragona bird in 1976 to the 1980s was thought to have come from Mallorca (although we shall never know the truth), but what is true is that the Griffon Vultures that are regularly recorded in Mallorca certainly come from the Iberian Peninsula (a sea journey of not less than 187 km).

In my opinion, the behaviour and characteristics of the Welsh Monk Vulture could perfectly well be those of a wild individual.

Ricard Gutiérrez

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Incredible bird records

In recent months, I have detected a hint of naïveté and gullibility running through the correspondence in *British Birds*.

First, we had 'old curmudgeon' Keith Bowey (*Brit. Birds* 88: 334-335) stating that the conservation problems of Spix's Macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii*, and 300 other endangered species, can be solved by not paying £30,000 for a stuffed Great Auk *Pinguinus impennis*. His suggestion of an empty case with a suitable label may go down well at the Tate Gallery, but I do not believe that the citizens of Glasgow would accept it. The Glasgow Museum Great Auk has now ceased to be an 'investment' and in public hands will become an object of education, science and

wonderment for all who gaze upon it—free of charge. The price paid for something so historic is a bargain by today's standards.

Gullibility rears its head in the realm of the Great Auk through Dr W. R. P. Bourne (*Brit. Birds* 88: 335), who expects us to believe that the BOU figurehead, Col. H. M. Drummond-Hay, in 1852, peering no doubt through his monocle off Newfoundland, spotted not just a rare bird but an extinct one! He at first thought that it was a 'northern diver' and that is probably just what he saw (Newton 1862). WRPB also informed us that *Gavia immer* could not have been involved, since the sighting was 'too far out to sea'—a strange argument for a species which winters off Newfoundland and crosses the Atlantic Ocean from as far away as Baffin Island to winter in Shetland (Heubeck *et al.* 1993). The Col. noted the 'white patches' on a December Great Auk which, had it still existed, would probably have been in full winter plumage and generally white about the face as are Gaviiformes. The white pre-orbital patches evidently moulted to dark on winter birds (Bourne 1993). Being very kind, one could suggest that the Col. saw a White-billed Diver *G. adamsii*. Similarly, the bird reported washed up in Newfoundland around the same time is unsubstantiated—no specimen, no bones, no description—therefore no record. Divers in primary moult over winter are, like Razorbills *Alca torda* and Common Guillemots *Uria aalge*, flightless, and finding a corpse in such condition would lead the uneducated to believe that the bird was indeed a permanently flightless species.

WRPB also forgets that we already have a new American waterbird breeding in Europe—the Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*, although it appears to be genetically identical according to the criteria described by Dr A. G. Knox (*Brit. Birds* 87: 51-58) to what we call the White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala*, which should now be reduced to a subspecies. We have the naïveté of the Wildfowl Trust (as it was then called) to thank for that addition.

Finally, G. Buzzard (*Brit. Birds* 88: 116) drew attention to a spurious record of Canary Island Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus (moquini) meadewaldoi* reported by local fishermen 30 years after the event, and in turn about 30 years after the species became extinct. Notwithstanding such a hazy recollection—would they have known a Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* had they seen one, or, more appropriately in this instance, a Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* had one landed on the shore? I think not. I dismissed this record at the time I prepared my note (*Brit. Birds* 87: 269-270). I prefer fact to fiction. There are more-believable sightings of the late Elvis Presley.

All records of rare birds should be viewed critically; old records should also be viewed sceptically.

Bernard Zonfrillo

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Great Auk good buy

It is entirely inappropriate for Mr Bowey (*Brit. Birds* 88: 334-335) to associate the purchase of a mounted Great Auk *Pinguinus impennis* by the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum with the plight of endangered species. His contention that the money would be better spent on saving Spix's Macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii* is, perhaps, a pretty enough idea. In practical terms, it is nonsense. Had the Glasgow authorities decided that the Great Auk was not an appropriate specimen for their collection, they would have used their money to buy a painting, an item of local furniture or some other relevant object. Being attentive custodians of their local heritage, however, they did realise the significance of the specimen and they did buy it.

The stuffed Great Auk should captivate the minds of Glaswegians for many years to come.

Errol Fuller

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Call-only records

Mike Rogers' feature on identification pitfalls and assessment problems of bee-eaters *Merops* (*Brit. Birds* 88: 221-223) reminded me of an occasion in mid summer about ten years ago at Bempton Cliffs, North Yorkshire. The querulous call of an unfledged young Common Guillemot *Uria aalge* carried by the updraught reached a group of birdwatchers standing in the light fog on the clifftop. The call was baffling to the entire assembly, and European Bee-eater *M. apiaster* was one suggestion put forward. A rarities committee, if in munificent mood, might well have accepted the record as such, allowing for the fact that only the fog prevented the bird from being seen, since the date, locality and meteorological conditions would all fit the known occurrence pattern of this species in the UK.

Here in Abu Dhabi, the few resident birdwatchers have no difficulty at all in recognising the hoarser calls of Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *M. superciliosus* and distinguishing them from those of European Bee-eater, and usually we do not even try to see them to confirm our identification (although we are not blasé, we may be foolhardy). The former's call is most definitely more grating or rasping than that of the latter. My transcription differs from Rogers' own, which is, of course, an additional assessment problem.

Should the British Birds Rarities Committee accept none, some or all 'heard-only' records? It would be a shame for records to be lost simply because a bird was unseen. County bird reports are perhaps the appropriate place to lodge these records, with a suitable caveat or, for want of a better word, downgraded to 'bee-eater species' as Rogers suggested.

There is one further consideration. Quite apart from birders playing bird tapes in the British countryside, as a hoax or otherwise, many birds are accomplished mimics, including several migrant species likely to have encountered either or both bee-eater species (amongst other species vagrant, rare or even unrecorded in Britain) on their own travels. I have, for instance, heard Sedge Warbler

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus make a plausible imitation of the call of an African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer* at Cley, Norfolk, although the latter species remains unlikely to be recorded in Britain even at that renowned rarity hotspot. Mimicry of the learnt calls or songs may continue for several months without the original species having to be heard again.

The issue should not prevent our enjoyment of birdwatching simply because the county records or national rarities committee remains unconvinced that the sound of the Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguineae* heard on Fair Isle, Shetland, in early October had not come through the observatory's open window where a film of Tarzan (in Africa!) was on TV, or maintains that we had not excluded Blue-winged Kookaburra *D. leachii*.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Call-only records (in the strict sense) are *never* accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee, and even those when a distinctive call is heard and the bird is seen briefly or at long range are very critically assessed.

Age of Norfolk Red-breasted Nuthatch

The British Birds Rarities Committee was uncertain as to whether the Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*, first observed by Aley & Aley (1995) in Norfolk on 13th October 1989, was a male or a bright female. Based on photographs that accompanied their article and subsequent BBRC comments (*Brit. Birds* 88: 150-153, plates 36-37), I am quite certain that the bird was a first-year male. This determination is based on the combination of the contrast in colour between the wing-coverts and the back, indicating first-year, and the black crown and ear-coverts, indicating male among young birds.

I have recently examined specimens of Red-breasted Nuthatch as part of a survey of first-year wing-covert moults of North American passerines. As with European Nuthatch *S. europaea* (Jenni & Winkler 1994), Red-breasted and other North American nuthatches replace relatively few wing-coverts and no remiges during the first prebasic [= post-juvenile] moult. On all four North American species, the contrast between the greyish wing feathers and the bluer back is a reliable indication of first-year of both sexes; adults show concolorous bluish backs and wings. The photographs of the Norfolk bird clearly show such a contrast. While adult female Red-breasted Nuthatch can show a dull black crown and ear-coverts, perhaps matching the Norfolk bird's appearance, first-year females have distinctly greyish plumage in these areas. Thus, given that the bird was in its first autumn, it was a male.

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REVIEWS

Bird Identification: a reference guide.

By Kristian Adolfsen & Stefan Cherrug.

SOF, Lund, 1995. 379 pages. ISBN 91-86572-24-5. Paperback, Europe: 220 SEK (+60 SEK if cheque); rest of World: 240 SEK (+60 SEK if cheque).

The standard researcher's tool—*Zoological Record: Section 18: Aves*—is not generally available in the ordinary birdwatcher's personal library, purely for reasons of cost, although it will be accessible in every serious ornithological library. This new reference guide performs the same task for the single subject of bird identification, with the advantage that it covers 20 years of published papers, notes and photographs in a single volume. The 11,800 references, compiled from 66 ornithological journals published in 21 countries, are grouped under species, so, for instance, all the references (to identification) for Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* occupy two pages. Unlike *Zoological Record*, there is no separate listing under author (sensibly, for that would probably have been largely a waste of space for the potential users of this book). Under each species, the references are listed rather strangely, in alphabetical order of the country of the journal concerned, rather than, for instance, by date order, which might have been helpful for anyone wishing to consult only the latest references on the identification of a particular species. Under Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, for instance, this leads to an *Egretta* reference (from Austria) being followed by one from *Aves* (Belgium), one from *Dansk Ornithologisk Forenings Tidsskrift* (Denmark), single references from *Lintumies* and *Ornis*

Fennica (both Finland) and then five from *Birding World*, one from *Birds*, two from *Birdwatch*, ten from *British Birds*, one from *Scottish Birds* and two from *Twitching* (all Great Britain), and so on through Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the USA. This system does have the advantage that references in any one particular journal are all grouped together (which can be useful for follow-up information), so may in practice be as convenient as a date-sequence listing. Species are listed in standard Voous order, and there is an index of scientific names and another of English names.

This reference guide should help to ensure that future identification papers are thoroughly researched, and will help the discoverer of any rare bird to find quickly relevant published information to expand upon that given in the field guides. Illustrations are minimal, being confined to a few space-filling (but very pleasing) line-drawings by Peter Elfman, and a beautiful colour painting of Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis* by Hans Larsson on the cover.

The two compilers of this list of identification references have performed a very useful service for European bird-identifiers, and this volume deserves to find its way on to the bookshelves of most individual birders.

J. T. R. Sharrock

Birds and Climate Change.

By John F. Burton.

Christopher Helm, London, 1995. 376 pages; 11 black-and-white plates; 25 line-drawings; 34 figs. ISBN 0-7136-4045-6. £24.99.

For John Burton, 'global warming' (human-induced global climate change) is not a hypothetical possibility. If it has not already commenced, it is imminent. I agree, although there are other significant features of the present book with which I take issue. It is not, incidentally, primarily about global warming. Rather, it reviews the history of Europe's birds from the last Ice Age to the present day, focusing on events since the nineteenth century. The possible conse-

quences of global climate change are then set in this context. Mixed throughout the text are occasional references to other taxa (insects and mammals in particular), and to other continents (North America), but in a rather unsystematic and bitty way.

As a source of reference, it is valuable. For example, chapters 6-10 are chiefly concerned with detailed accounts of over 200 species of birds which spread north and west across Europe in the climatic ameliora-

tion of 1850-1950. Here, and in numerous appendices, Burton brings together a wealth of otherwise scattered, and difficult-to-obtain information. The sheer scale of the changes that have taken place in Europe's avifauna on a time scale of a few hundred years is staggering.

Unfortunately, the comprehensive and detailed nature of the information does not make for an easy read. Nor is it a book to be studied uncritically. I do not share Burton's unblinking faith that climate accounts for virtually all changes in range; his analyses lack statistical rigour and a proper evaluation

of alternatives, not least habitat modification. The biggest omission is its failure to suggest possible mechanisms, except for occasional references to food supply.

Anybody interested in large-scale past, and likely future, changes in the distribution and abundance of bird species should read this book. So should conservation biologists, struggling to uphold the myth of 'natural distributions'. But take its main message—that climate is *the* primary determinant of species' distributions—as a bold hypothesis and a source of ideas, not as established fact.

John H. Lawton

The Marsh Harrier.

By Roger Clarke.

Hamlyn, London, 1995. 126 pages; 19 colour plates; 26 line-drawings. ISBN 0-600-58301-5. Paperback £12.99.

Most monographs are based on the author's own observations, supplemented by, and compared with, those of other workers. This book, as the introduction tells us, is not based on personal study, but is a general review. Clarke has combed the literature and produced a good general account of the ecology of the Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, including history, distribution, breeding biology, behaviour and a final chapter on threats and conservation.

At times, it appears that published sources have been quoted rather uncritically, and, as these make up a high proportion of the

material used, it is a pity that full references are not given in the bibliography. Some of the most up-to-date references are from a harrier conference held in 1993 (Clarke is the *Proceedings* editor), but these papers have not yet been published.

Generally, this is a comprehensive and readable account, although more emphasis on the special features of the species (e.g. polygyny, large clutch size, recent adaptation to crop-nesting in Britain) would have added greater depth and interest. It is, however, a useful addition to the series.

John Underhill-Day

New World Warblers.

By Jon Curson. Illustrated by David Quinn & David Beadle.

Christopher Helm, London, 1994. 252 pages; 36 colour plates; 117 distribution maps. ISBN 0-7136-3932-6. £24.99.

To many, the New World warblers (Parulidae) form a particularly stunning group of species, which in spring plumage are difficult to beat. Anyone who has been to the New World to see these birds on spring migration will know that the number of birdwatchers who gather to see these birds is testimony to the group's popularity.

This recent addition to the Christopher Helm Identification Guides follows the series' familiar format. The introductory chapters cover taxonomy, evolution, dimorphism, breeding behaviour and conservation, all in some detail. In addition, there is useful discussion on superspecies, the Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* complex and hybridisation.

The individual species accounts are reviewed under Identification, Description, Geographical Variation, Voice, Habitat and habits, Status, Distribution, Movements, Moults, Measurements and References. The texts appear to be both accurate and concise, and pull together much useful information not readily available in any other single-volume publication. They usefully include biometric data and black-and-white drawings of relevant tail shapes and patterns, which will be of particular interest to ringers. The differences in moult terminology used in North America and in Europe are explained, which is helpful and will be useful for the international marketing of the book.

There are very few errors. The only one

likely to cause much confusion is on page 58, opposite plate 19, where the captions are transposed for the two races of Belding's Yellowthroat *Geothlypis beldingi*: the text for 55a should be exchanged with that of 55c. The only minor shortfall concerns the song descriptions, which are sometimes hard to understand. Songs are always difficult to translate to the reader and there are few, if any, books which have achieved this adequately.

The 116 species of North American and Neotropical wood-warblers appear on 36 colour plates. Several age-related plumages are depicted whenever relevant, as well as the normal seasonal plumage variations.

The two artists, David Beadle and David Quinn, are to be congratulated on their fine

artwork. Few of the species illustrated have lost their visual impact from the field to the plate, and my own favourite, the Prothonotary Warbler *Protonotaria citrea*, has lost none of its appeal.

The book has been well planned and the plates reproduced to a very high standard. Its size also allows it to be used, to some degree, in the field, but much of its value will be as a source of reference, or just simply to study the plates. I can thoroughly recommend it to all, particularly those with an interest in this group of birds, whether resident in or frequent visitor to North, Central or South America, or who search for potential vagrants in southwest Britain or Ireland during the autumn.

Séan McMinn

Important Bird Areas in the Middle East.

Compiled by M. I. Evans.

BirdLife International, Cambridge, 1994. 410 pages. ISBN 0-946888-28-0. Paperback £24.75.

Many Middle Eastern countries are popular destinations for birdwatchers, owing, no doubt, to their wide range of habitats (not just deserts!) that harbour a wealth of birds, including many endangered species. Conservation in a few of these countries is well developed, but in others much remains to be done. For the first time, this welcome volume lists all of the important bird sites in the region and describes them in detail so that planners and politicians cannot claim to be unaware of which areas merit special protection.

This book does not include Turkey (which was included in *Important Bird Areas in Europe* by Grimmett & Jones) or Egypt (and thus excludes the Sinai), though it does extend as far east as Afghanistan, and includes all of the southern Arabian countries.

After some interesting chapters on measures for site conservation, site selection, data presentation and an overview and recommendations, the bulk of this book is taken up with

the site accounts, each of which includes a detailed site description, a list of birds for which the site is important (sometimes with a status summary and sometimes with peak counts), notes on other threatened wildlife, a piece on conservation issues and, when relevant, a reference to further reading. Maps of each country show the location of the sites, but there is none for any of the individual sites.

Throughout the text, only scientific names are used for birds. English names are given in an appendix, but anyone unfamiliar with the scientific names of Middle Eastern birds will frequently need to refer to the back of the book.

This compilation was a joint project with the Ornithological Society of the Middle East, and was supported by the IWRB and the RSPB. We now only have to hope that those in authority in the relevant countries take note and help to conserve these important sites.

David Fisher

Ruffled Feathers and Worse: an outline of the legal measures for the protection of birds in the United Kingdom.

By James Fitzgerald & Nick Carter.

BTO/Simmons & Simmons, Thetford & London, 1995. 71 pages; 16 colour plates. £4.95.

The first impression is of an A4-sized internal report, not a document for external distribution. The only concession to an outside market is 16 small colour photographs, which have not succeeded. In his Foreword, Jeremy Greenwood states 'there

is now a plethora of legislation aimed at wildlife protection' and this volume brings it all under one cover. Approximately half of the contents consists of tables of habitats, species schedules and details of appendices to various conventions, several in a some-

what simplified form. Unfortunately, schedules regularly get amended or updated and there can be no guarantee that the information will be 100% accurate a short time after publication.

This is clearly intended to be functional,

and it has the look of a solicitors' document (the influence of Simmons & Simmons). For those working in this field, it will be useful; for the average birder or BTO member, probably not.

Bob Scott

Photographic Field Guide: Birds of Australia.

By Jim Flegg, with Steve Madge.

New Holland, London, 1994. 367 pages. Hardback ISBN 1-85368-353-1. £19.99. 1995 Paperback ISBN 1-85368-398-1. £14.99.

This comprehensive and excellent collection of photographs of Australian birds is presented as a field guide, with short texts opposite each page of photographs, along with a distribution map for each species. Photographic field guides of this kind inevitably suffer in comparison with those using painted illustrations, since only one or two photographs of each species are usually included: insufficient to illustrate all of the various plumages. Used to supplement a normal field guide, however, they are of great benefit, and that is primarily the use to which this book should be put. Anyone visiting Australia should certainly take a copy, along with a field guide of their choice.

The quality of the photographs is excellent and in the 1995 paperback edition all of the birds are correctly captioned (unlike many photographic books). In the 1994 hardback edition, however, the photograph captioned Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* shows a Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*; and the photographs of whistlers *Pachycephala* have been

muddled up completely, presumably at a fairly late stage in the editing: the bird captioned as a male Gilbert's Whistler *P. inornata* is a male Black-tailed (Mangrove Golden) Whistler *P. melanura*, the bird captioned as a male Mangrove Golden Whistler is a Grey-headed Whistler *P. griseiceps*, the bird captioned as a male 'Grey Whistler *P. simplex*' (= Grey-headed Whistler) is a male Rufous Whistler *P. rufiventris*, and the bird captioned as a male Rufous Whistler is a male Gilbert's Whistler. The 1995 edition corrects these errors and also includes revisions and additions to the text by Steve Madge. Anyone owning the first edition may wish to amend their copy.

It would have been useful if the date and place where each photograph was taken had been given, since this helps to clarify the plumage the bird is in and which race is involved. Nevertheless, this book makes a very nice, portable collection of photographs of Australian birds and is recommended.

David Fisher

Birds in Bahrain: a study of their migration patterns 1990-92.

By Erik Hirschfeld. Line-drawings by Hans Larsson.

Hobby Publications, Dubai, 1995. 124 pages; 27 line-drawings. ISBN 1-872839-03-7. Paperback £8.00.

This is my sort of book. The author has treated his personal observations in Bahrain as if he were a one-man moving bird observatory. By standardising watching areas and times of observations, and then analysing records by ten-day periods and plotting them as graphs using sliding three × ten-day averages, he indicates the relative likelihood of seeing each species at different times of year. For the rarer species, histograms of actual records are given rather than calculated graphs. Thus, the most interesting information relates to the commonest migrants, which

could so easily have been almost ignored if observations, recording and analysis had not been well organised. All species which were, in the author's opinion, reliably recorded in the country during 1990-92 are included.

The transposition of two pages is noted by an erratum slip, and there is a scattering of probably unimportant printer's errors and the occasional ambiguity (e.g. does '2-300 birds' mean two to 300 or does it mean 200 to 300?).

This book follows hot on the heels of Tom Nightingale & Mike Hill's *Birds of Bahrain*

(1993; reviewed *Brit. Birds* 87: 282), and anyone with an interest in or visiting the island of Bahrain will doubtless wish to own both books.

As well as documenting observations, Erik Hirschfeld notes that 'trapping of birds is quite widespread in Bahrain, especially in spring when many migrants are conspicuous. The most sought-after species are wheatears [*Oenanthe*] (for eating) and shrikes [*Lanius*] (for their pretty colours).' He notes that at least 500-1,000 Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni* are trapped each spring, which 'will have a serious effect on the World population of this vulnerable species unless

something is done immediately to stop it.' Another serious threat is to Sooty Falcons *F. concolor*, owing to a probably well-intentioned but misguided project to stock an artificial breeding programme with eggs and chicks from the remote islands where the species is breeding safely, and introduce these artificially reared birds to mainland Bahrain. One must hope that Erik Hirschfeld's words will draw attention to this potential error of judgment and lead to a proper scientific assessment of the best actions needed to safeguard the Sooty Falcon population.

Meanwhile, buy the book.

J. T. R. Sharrock

Collins Gem Birdwatching Photoguide.

By Rob Hume. Photographic consultants David & Jean Hosking.

HarperCollins, London, 1995. 240 pages; over 200 photographs. ISBN 0-00-470756-7. Paperback £3.50.

This is a marvellous book, absolutely crammed with spot-on advice for everyone contemplating taking up birdwatching as a hobby. It is not a field guide, but covers just about every other relevant topic. It is, however, the sort of book to which one wishes to refer when at home, planning what to do, so the tiny size (8.2 × 11.7 cm), standard for the 'Gem' series, seems highly inappropriate; there is no need for it to fit into a pocket. This

will, however, fit very well into a Christmas stocking, where it could do a tremendous amount of good . . . This book should be reprinted in a larger version, with very much larger print, for the benefit of the maturer beginner, for whom the small format and excruciatingly tiny print will be a deterrent. The text deserves a wide audience.

J. T. R. Sharrock

Birds of Glamorgan.

By Clive Hurford & Peter Lansdown.

Hurford & Lansdown, Cardiff, 1995. 228 pages; 30 colour plates; 16 black-and-white plates; 53 line-drawings; 127 distribution maps; 73 histograms. ISBN 1-872808-34-4. £25.00.

When I started birdwatching in Cardiff in the late 1960s, *The Birds of Glamorgan* by Heathcote, Griffin & Salmon was my main source of information. Poring over its pages, I was inspired to learn that Nightingales *Luscinia megarhynchos* and Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* used to breed on the farm from where I helped with the local milk round, a Little Auk *Alle alle* had been found on the pond near my school, Hawfinches *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* bred in the suburb of Cardiff where I lived and an Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* and many other rarities had been seen on the reservoir only 200 m from my house.

Now, nearly 30 years on, a new *Birds of Glamorgan* has been produced summarising the ornithological data amassed during the

intervening years, including the results of two breeding-bird atlas surveys. The book includes chapters on the history of bird-recording in Glamorgan, a summary of bird-ringing, a geological overview of the county, a description of the principal bird habitats including quite detailed botanical information, and the species accounts themselves.

Interestingly, the authors have chosen to revert to the Watsonian Vice-county system for the definition of the county boundaries, thus excluding parts of Monmouthshire and Breconshire which were treated as part of Glamorgan in the annual bird reports from 1974 to 1992. This results in many records of rarer species, especially from the Rumney Great Wharf area, being relegated to an appendix (including my record of two

Horned Larks *Eremophila alpestris* in 1972, which was the only species that I ever added to the county list). Their reasons for doing so do, however, seem logical.

The other slightly unusual feature of the book concerns the breeding-bird atlas maps, which, rather than using the standard international symbols (dots of different sizes), use solid black circles to show confirmed breeding records, stippled circles for probable breeding, and open circles for possible breeding. These conventions work well and give a clear picture of the atlas results.

The species accounts are well written and summarise the status of each bird succinctly. The book is attractively produced and includes a splendid selection of habitat and bird photographs in both black-and-white and colour. Anyone with an interest in the ornithology of Glamorgan will certainly want to obtain a copy, and I hope that it will inspire future generations of young (and not-so-young) birdwatchers resident in the county in the way that the earlier volume did me.

David Fisher

Birds and Weather: a birdwatchers' guide.

By Stephen Moss.

Hamlyn, London, 1995. 174 pages; 28 colour plates; 25 line-drawings; 27 maps. ISBN 0-600 58679-0. £16.99.

One of the thrills of birdwatching is finding the unexpected—from a Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* in your garden to a Siberian vagrant on an East Coast headland. We all know that the weather plays a major part in what turns up where; but not everybody can read a weather map well enough to predict a big East Coast fall, or to know that conditions are perfect for transatlantic vagrancy. Even fewer birders can explain why American vagrants make it to Europe more often now than 20 years ago. These and many other issues are addressed clearly and simply in this excellent little book. The 11 chapters

provide an introduction to climate, and to birds, weather and folklore, before launching into the influence of climate on migration patterns, vagrancy, seabirds, and birds in winter. The three closing chapters provide one of the best popular accounts of climate change that I have read. The focus throughout is upon Britain and Ireland, and is enlivened by Stephen Moss's palpable excitement as he relives some of the great weather-driven birding dramas of the last few decades.

A book to enjoy, and from which to learn.
John H. Lawton

Sjaeldne Fugle i Danmark: en oversigt over forekomsten af sjaeldne fugle i Danmark og Nordvesteuropa 1963-1992.

By Svend Rønne. Illustrated by Niels Knudsen.

Pinus, Skjern, 1994. 393 pages; 177 line-drawings; numerous maps and histograms. ISBN 87-7722-068-4. DKR 345.

This is the Danish equivalent of our *Rare Birds in Britain and Ireland* (Sharrock & Sharrock 1976; updated by Dymond, Fraser & Gantlett 1989). The text is wholly in Danish, although scientific names and English names are given for each bird species. For those not able to read Danish, there is no English-language summary, but the maps and histograms are self-explanatory. The maps of Denmark show numbers of records in each region (by actual numerals rather than symbols) and, where appropriate, there are histograms showing distributions of all the records for 11 mainly northwestern European

countries in addition to Denmark: Iceland, the Faroes, 'England' (= Britain & Ireland), the Netherlands, Germany (former West and former East), Poland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and France. The species texts include mention of relevant identification papers and there are lists of other useful references.

This compilation is considerably enhanced by evocative drawings by Niels Knudsen. Although clearly aimed mainly at Danish readers, it will be a useful source of reference for everyone interested in the rare birds of Western Europe.

J. T. R. Sharrock

Hamlyn Photographic Guide to the Waders of the World.

By David Rosair & David Cottridge.

Hamlyn, London, 1995. 175 pages; 700 colour plates. ISBN 0-600-58475-5. £24.99.

This book is essentially a photographic review of all the World's 212 extant species of Charadrii, including sheathbills (*Chionididae*) and Plains-wanderer *Pedionomus torquatus*. Accompanying text covers races, range and movements, plumages, habitat and behaviour.

Remarkably, there are photographs for 208 species, omitting only Eskimo Curlew *Numenius borealis*, Imperial Snipe *Gallinago imperialis*, and two of the woodcocks *Scolopax*. For several species, it is likely that these are the first ever to be published, and for Tuamotu Sandpiper *Prosobonia cancellata* and Giant Snipe *G. undulata*, for example, they are certainly the first I have seen. Others, however, are familiar, having been featured already in the pages of this journal for example. The quality of photography and reproduction is superb throughout. No shots are of birds in the hand, while many have clearly been selected to display important aspects of behaviour or identification features. David Cottridge, although himself the most prolific photographic contributor, has trawled extensively for high-quality images. Brief captions identify the species and, where

appropriate, the sex, plumage or race depicted, for which the assistance of BB's own Richard Chandler is acknowledged. Sadly, the authors have included neither date nor place; this would have been of particular value, since clearly marked seasonal changes in appearance are the norm for waders.

David Rosair's informative and well-written text adds insights clearly drawn from his personal field experience of more than 180 of the species. The material and its presentation have more of a 'handbook' feel than the 'field-guide' style of the previous Hamlyn photographic guide (to the birds of Britain and Europe). In an unwelcome change of format from that work, there are no line-drawings to clarify identification points, and no distribution maps. Too high a frequency of spelling errors, particularly in subspecies' names in the captions, also seriously limits the value of the text for reference purposes. The high standard, completeness of coverage and, in some cases, rarity of the photographs, however, make this book an essential purchase for any wader enthusiast.

John H. Marchant

Managing Habitats for Conservation.

Edited by William J. Sutherland & David A. Hill.

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 399 pages; 19 colour plates; 118 black-and-white plates. ISBN 0-521-44776-3, paperback £17.95; ISBN 0-521-44260-5, hardback £55.00.

This book is aimed at conservationists responsible for managing an area and provides the information necessary to make sound management decisions. It is a practical guide to what needs to be done, but does not describe the techniques, which can be found in British Trust for Conservation Volunteers manuals, for example.

Introductory chapters on the principles of ecological management and preparing management plans are followed by separate chapters by well-known experts, such as John Andrews, Chris Baines, David Bellamy, Richard Hobbs, Nigel Holmes and George Peterken, on ten major habitats, including waterbodies, grasslands, farmland, woodland and urban areas, as well as one on access,

which covers car parks, footpaths, hides and signs.

The authors use their wide experience to give many valuable insights into problems, and their solutions are often illustrated by excellent, clear diagrams. The book is, indeed, copiously illustrated, but the inclusion of purely decorative colour plates was surely unnecessary for the specialised audience looking for the hard information which this book provides.

This book should be on every land-manager's bookshelf (and mostly off it) and, at a paperback price of under £18, it is great value.

Franklyn Perring

Birds in Europe: their conservation status.

Compiled by Graham M. Tucker & Melanie F. Heath with L. Tomiałojć & R. F. A. Grimmett.

BirdLife International, Cambridge, 1994. 600 pages; numerous maps. ISBN 0-947888-29-9. Paperback £29.50.

This work can only be described as monumental. It provides, for the first time, a detailed review of Europe's birds, classifying 514 regularly occurring species according to their conservation status. As a testament to the amount of information contained in the book, there are 72 pages of references.

Be prepared—it makes depressing reading and contains many surprises. The most-threatened species are dealt with in detail. Information is given about distribution, population trends, threats and conservation measures. A table gives details of the present breeding or wintering population and whether the numbers are declining, increasing or stable. Where appropriate, a map also shows

the status in each country.

What is depressing is that so many of the maps are peppered with blue arrows showing declines. Among the surprises is that the Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, substantially declining over most of Europe, is increasing most in the UK. The message within the book is that positive conservation initiatives can help. Anyone travelling to a European country should use this book to find out what is really happening and give support to the often-struggling BirdLife partners, who are all trying to halt these worrying declines among Europe's birds.

Chris Harbard

The Oxford Book of Creatures. By Fleur Adcock & Jacqueline Simms. (OUP, Oxford, 1995. 387 pages. ISBN 0-19-214225-7. £17.99) Poetry and prose on everything from Adder and Archaeopteryx to Yellowhammer and Zebra, by authors as diverse as Richard Adams and Aesop to Alfred, Lord Tennyson, J. R. R. Tolkien, Virginia Woolf and W. B. Yates. Good browsing stuff.
JTRS

Birds to Watch 2: the World list of threatened birds. By N. J. Collar, M. J. Crosby & A. J. Stattersfield. (BirdLife International, Cambridge, 1994. 407 pages. ISBN 0-946888-30-2. Paperback £20.50) This book replaces *Birds to Watch* (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 82: 84). It deals with the same subject in the same basic manner, but presents an entirely new evaluation of the World's threatened bird species using new IUCN criteria. A total of 1,111 species is identified as threatened, and for each one there is a brief summary of distribution, numbers and threats, with precise coding of its status. The book also lists 11 species as Conservation Dependent, 66 as Data Deficient and 875 as Near-threatened. In all, therefore, one-fifth of the World's birds are shown to be at some risk of global extinction. The book identifies considerable gaps in our knowledge of some species: information that could be crucial to their survival.

RJP

Collins Atlas of Bird Migration. General Editor Jonathan Elphick. (HarperCollins, London, 1995. 180 pages. ISBN 0-00-220038-4. £16.99) This is a lavishly illustrated and very informative introduction to bird migration, and with Chris Mead and Dr Malcolm Ogilvie among the contributors we can expect the content to be both reliable and entertaining. After a very thorough review of why and how birds migrate, the different migration strategies of a wide range of species are described. Glance through the pages and any thought of migration being a straightforward, north-south seasonal movement disappears at once, because here, graphically portrayed for us, is a variety of highly complex, individual migrations.

The bright, bold maps are sometimes a little difficult to follow, especially when information about two species has been condensed onto one map, but that is a quibble. This book provides a valuable source of information.

Peter Holden

To Fair Isle and Back. By John Holloway. (Stronsay Bird Reserve, Mill Bay, Stronsay, Orkney, 1995. 112 pages. ISBN 0-9526298-0-1. Paperback £8.50 + £1 p & p) The story of the making of his own nature-reserve-cum-bird-observatory on Stronsay, Orkney, illustrated with his own evocative paintings. It would be easy to sink into envy as one reads of splendid selections of rare migrants, but the correct emotion should be admiration, for

John & Sue Holloway chose the site carefully, gave up the 'soft life' of southern England and created the habitats where most of their birds are now found. This book tells the story, and, if you want to go and visit them, telephone 01857 616363.

JTRS

Where to Watch Birds in Italy. Compiled by Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli. (Christopher Helm, London, 1994. 224 pages. ISBN 0-7136-3867-2. Paperback

£10.99) Though not usually regarded as a major birding destination, Italy has a lot to offer visiting birders, as is well shown by this very useful addition to the Christopher Helm/A. & C. Black 'Where to Watch Birds' series. The guide is well organised, with details of 103 birding areas, useful maps, lists of species, and contacts, often with telephone numbers. Indispensable for anyone visiting Italy.

RJC



DIARY DATES

Compiled by Sheila D. Cobban

This list covers January to December 1996

5th-7th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Details from BTO, The Nunnery, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

31st January BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR: closing date for entries.

9th March SOC/BTO JOINT CONFERENCE. St Margaret's Hall, Craiglockhart Campus, Napier University, Edinburgh. Details from David Kelly, SOC Lothians Branch, 149 High Street, Prestonpans, East Lothian EH32 9AX.

15th March BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR: closing date for entries. *Note new dimensions of drawings* (see page 564).

22nd-24th March RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. University of York. Details from Events Section, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

29th-31st March IRISH WILDBIRD CONSERVANCY/RSPB ALL-IRELAND CONFERENCE. 'Biodiversity—variety is the spice of life.' The Grand Hotel, Wicklow. Details from IWC, Rutledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin.

19th-21st April BOU/WILDFOWL & WETLANDS TRUST JOINT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. Bristol. Details from BOU, c/o Natural

History Museum, Akeman Street, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP.

19th-20th May 1996 CHILTERN BIRD & WILDLIFE FAIR. College Lake Wildlife Centre, Bulbourne, near Tring, Hertfordshire.

25th July to 9th August SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission £2.00 (free to SWLA members).

16th-18th August BRITISH BIRDWATCHING FAIR. Egleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water, Leicestershire.

1st September YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR: closing date for entries.

7th-8th September SCOTTISH BIRDWATCHING FAIR. Vane Farm RSPB Reserve, Kinross.

6th-8th December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. Details from BTO.

15th December THE BEST ANNUAL BIRD REPORT AWARDS: closing date for entries.

Mrs S. D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

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Field identification of Pine Bunting

Hadoram Shirihai, David A. Christie and Alan Harris

The Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* breeds mainly in the open woodland and forest edge of Siberia and west to the Urals. It is a partial migrant, wintering in northern China and northern India to Afghanistan, with a few west to the Middle East (regular in northern and central Israel in November-March), and a vagrant elsewhere in Europe (mainly in late autumn and winter). In both the breeding season and the non-breeding season, it overlaps in range with the Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*, with which it hybridises. In winter, mixed parties are found in lightly wooded country, often farmland with deciduous growth, including orchards with interspersed pine woods or open bushy areas; the Pine Bunting, however, prefers higher elevations than the Yellowhammer.

In their interesting assessment of British Pine Bunting records, Bradshaw & Gray (1993) have enriched our knowledge of a species that can cause major identification problems at certain times and in certain places, and have thus added to the process to which Lewington (1990), Lewington *et al.* (1991) and Svensson (1992) have already contributed. Bradshaw & Gray (1993) have highlighted the dilemma confronting observers when faced with a putative Pine Bunting; readers are recommended to refer to their paper as well as to the present one.

The following information is based mainly on nine years of intensive observations by HS of Pine Buntings and Yellowhammers on their common wintering grounds near and around Jerusalem and at other places in northern and central Israel. HS, DAC and AH are currently preparing a book on the identification of difficult groups of species, to be published in 1996 by Macmillan Publishers Ltd, and the painting accompanying this paper (fig. 1 on page 626) is

basically a result of 'the Jerusalem experience' together with museum work carried out in connection with that book.

General identification features

In structure, behaviour and voice, Pine Bunting and Yellowhammer appear almost identical, even to experienced observers. Adult male and first-year male Pine show an unmistakable chestnut, white and black head pattern, and rufous on the breast. Females of the two species are virtually identical in pattern and coloration, although most Yellowhammers show a variable amount of yellow at least on the central belly, crown and supercilium (Pine lacks all yellow).



Plates 209-211. Above, first-winter female Pine Buntings *Emberiza leucocephalos*, Jerusalem, Israel, December 1985 (Rami Mizrahi). Note head and throat-breast patterns and upperpart streaking.

FACING PAGE

Plates 212-217. Female Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella* of race *erythrogenys*, Jerusalem, Israel, mid-winter 1980s (Hadoram Shirihai). Top left, first-winter, 'non-yellow' plumage. Top centre, adult, 'non-yellow' plumage: note crown and upperpart streaking. Top right, first-winter, normal plumage: note yellow pigmentation. Centre left, adult, 'non-yellow' plumage: note head and throat-breast pattern. Centre right, first-winter, normal plumage: note yellow pigmentation. Bottom, adult, 'non-yellow' plumage: note slight yellow tone on remex fringes.



The main problem is separating female Pine from 'non-yellow' female Yellowhammers (the latter are not uncommon regionally, e.g. in Israel in winter). At close range, most individuals of both species exhibit a combination of constant differences, but a degree of overlap exists and trapping has shown that a few are so alike as to be inseparable in the field. Adult and first-year females are largely similar (first-years have primaries and rectrices more pointed and worn, and unmoulted tertials more worn), but most 'non-yellow' Yellowhammers are first-years.

Identification of females

In the field, and even in the hand, the only useful, constant differences between females of Pine Bunting and those of 'non-yellow' Yellowhammer are as follows:

1. *Remex fringes* White or whitish-buff on Pine, never with any yellowish pigment as on most Yellowhammers.

2. *Head-top streaks* On Pine, crown streaks are generally more marked on individual feathers (creating total crown pattern), on average blacker and narrower, more often almost confined to feather shafts, with slightly more pointed ends (brownier on Yellowhammer, averaging wider and with less or no point). Streaks are more restricted to the lateral crown on Pine, with far fewer on the central crown (can appear as a paler crown-stripe), this pattern added to by the deeper and higher supercilium (often resulting in appearance of a better-defined or prominent darkish lateral crown-stripe). Yellowhammer normally (not always) shows a more evenly streaked crown and narrower supercilium. Otherwise, female Pine shows striking contrast between lateral part of crown and paler and almost unstreaked supercilium (but supercilium sometimes whitish, with very thin faint streaks), whereas Yellowhammer shows less contrast owing to its greyer supercilium. Most (but not all) female Pine tend to have a conspicuous brownish patch on rear lateral crown area and side of upper neck, created by slightly denser streaking with more brown or rufous fringes, whereas this patch is reduced or lacking on most Yellowhammers.

3. *Side of head* On female Pine, the apparent broadness of the supercilium is also a result of its reaching downwards to almost half eye level; on most 'non-yellow' Yellowhammers, the supercilium reaches only just below top of eye. Pine's broader and higher supercilium (well apparent in front of eye) is almost concolorous with the (broader) paler loreal area, but contrasts greatly with the (smaller) ear-covert area; as opposed to Yellowhammer's darker loreal area which is more concolorous with the (wider) ear-covert area, together producing less contrast with the greyer (whitish on Pine) supercilium. The whitish eye-ring of Pine Bunting is on average more neatly defined than Yellowhammer's and stands out more clearly.

4. *Nape colour* The grey area on sides of neck, nape and hindneck of Pine is slightly suffused with and/or faintly streaked brown, whereas on Yellowhammer it is purer and cleaner grey and from most angles covers a smaller area than on most Pine.

5. *Underparts* Pine Bunting, apart from its moustachial stripe tending to appear more prominent than Yellowhammer's, also tends to have a stronger and better-defined malar stripe composed of three or four rows of blackish blotches, rather than Yellowhammer's generally weaker stripe of two or three rows of blackish-brown blotches (but can appear as conspicuous as on Pine). Pine tends in general to have fine spots or streaks over a wider area of the throat, often spread quite evenly and extending from lower throat up towards bill, whereas Yellowhammer's throat shows fewer markings (often extending just to lower or central throat). The entire underparts of Pine are whiter, apart from a buff suffusion on chest, and the upper-breast streaking is more blackish, fading and with intermixed rufous-orange markings towards breast sides and flanks. A comparable pattern occurs on Yellowhammer, but the latter lacks Pine's diagnostic fine blackish markings on upper breast. Pine's undertail-coverts are on average more finely and faintly streaked than on Yellowhammer, or are even unstreaked (unlike Yellowhammer), but can, rarely, be quite heavily streaked.

6. *Less-obvious differences* These include Yellowhammer's diagnostic yellowish underwing-coverts (sometimes inconspicuous). Female Pine tends on average to have more intense rufous pigments to the fringes of the lowest row of scapulars, with the lesser upperwing-coverts more uniform grey-brown (less grey than on Yellowhammer). Pine's head often appears more square-shaped, peaking at rear crown, and a small crest is erected when nervous (indistinct on Yellowhammer). Both species show about the same primary projection (sometimes slightly longer on Pine), and both also show two closely spaced primary tips at the wingtip, as well as one shorter primary tip; only Pine, however, shows (not always) a fourth primary tip (or tertial tip falls approximately level with this fourth tip or, rarely, slightly conceals it). Otherwise, a few 'very old' female Pine Buntings show an indication of non-adult male pattern, with at least some rufous on the breast and even a whitish patch on the central crown and more chestnut coloration on the head.

Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to Rami Mizrachi for valuable discussion and for sharing many years of observations in Jerusalem. We also thank Macmillan Publishers Ltd for permission to reproduce the painting (fig. 1) from our forthcoming book *Macmillan Birder's Guide to European and Middle Eastern Birds*.

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Fig. 1. Female Pine Buntings *Emberiza leucocephalos* and Yellowhammers *E. citrinella* (Alan Harris). (Reproduced by permission of Macmillan Publishers Ltd)

Top left and bottom left,
female Yellowhammer lacking yellow.

Top right, normal female Yellowhammer.

Bottom centre and right, female Pine Bunting.

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The inclusion of plates 209-217 in colour has been subsidised by support from Carl Zeiss Ltd, sponsor of the British Birds Rarities Committee.



YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR

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Having thoroughly enjoyed examining the high-quality entries during last year's judging session, the six judges assembled again at 'Fountains' with keen anticipation. We were not disappointed.

The competition aims to encourage a serious study of ornithology by up-and-coming birdwatchers and to promote a conscientious attitude towards wildlife and the recording of observations. Entrants are asked to submit their actual field notebooks and also any logbooks or notes written up afterwards as a permanent record.

This year's three winning entries were all of an outstandingly high standard, as evidenced by the judges' scores (see below; each judge independently rated each entry out of ten).

The winners were as follows:

JUNIOR **Jonathan Dean** (St Andrews, Fife) Aged 12
(12 years and under)

INTERMEDIATE **Matthew Harding** (Blackburn, Lancashire) Aged 13
(13-16 years)

SENIOR **Jane Reid** (Yarm, Cleveland) Aged 20
(17-21 years)

Runners-up: the judges were also impressed by two other entries and wished to congratulate Tom Fieldsend (junior age-group) and Mark Gurney (senior age-group) on the high quality of their field notebooks.

A flavour of the judges' enthusiasm is given by the following quotes:

JONATHAN DEAN 'Genuine field notebook.' 'Makes his own interpretations.' 'Mature, observant, meticulous.' 'Formidable promise.' 'Good detailed notes.' 'An obvious enthusiast.'

Scores 9 9 9 9 9 8, average 8.8

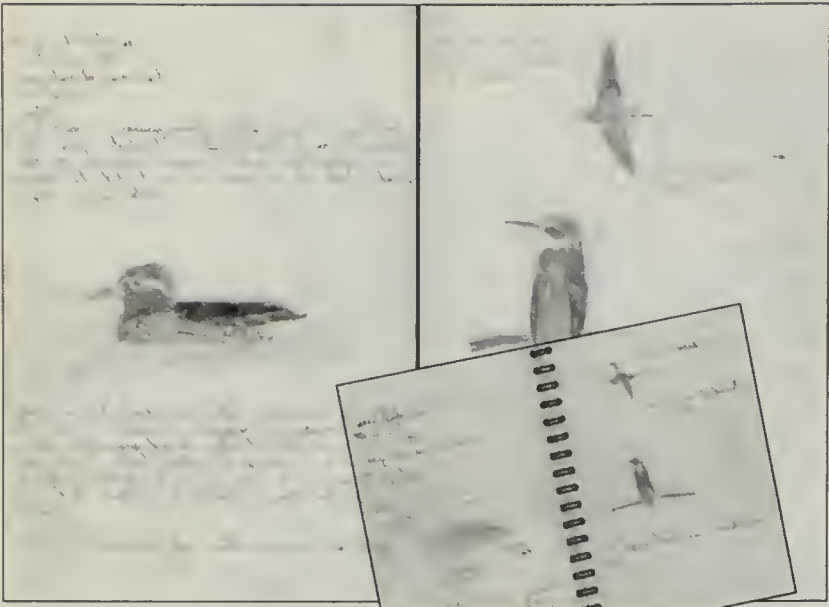
MATTHEW HARDING 'Amazing quantity of top-quality field observations.' 'Great breadth and depth.' 'Outstanding field notebooks. Enthusiastic and enquiring mind. Well illustrated, with lively sketches.' 'Promising artist with talent. Promising natural-history photographer.' 'Very enthusiastic.' 'Good all-round naturalist.'

Scores 9 9 9 9 9 8, average 8.8

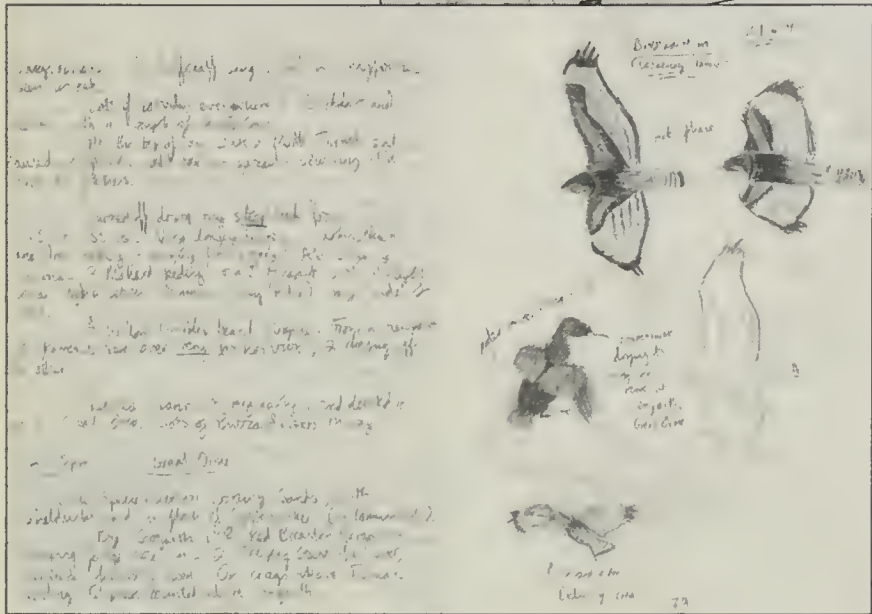
JANE REID 'Top-class work by a future leading World-class ornithologist.' 'Equally thorough, impressive and accurate on both common birds and rarities.' 'Excellent sketches.' 'Impressive critical observations of plumage variations.' 'First-rate sketches with great attention to detail.' 'Lovely sketches. Meticulous attention to detail. Good to see her applying her skills to a practical conservation project.'

Scores 10 9 9 9 9 8, average 9.0

Some sample pages of the winners' field notebooks (figs. 1-3) give a further flavour of the high standards this year. (Highly illustrated pages have been chosen, for their interest, but the judges do not allow artistic ability—or inability—to dominate their judgments.)



Jonathan Dean
(Junior winner)



Matthew Harding
(Intermediate winner)



Jane Reid (Senior winner)

Figs. 1-3. Examples from the pages of the notebooks of the three winners of the title 'Young Ornithologists of the Year' 1995.

The rules for the 1996 competition will again call for the submission of field notebooks and other more-permanent records, as in 1995. The winners will receive prizes worth over £2,500. We hope that *BB* readers will encourage any keen birders who will be aged under 22 on 31st August 1996 to enter this competition.

Acknowledgments

We are most grateful to the ten sponsors of this competition—J. Barbour & Sons Ltd, the British Trust for Ornithology, Christopher Helm Publishers Ltd, the Hamlyn Publishing Group, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, Oxford University Press, Pan Macmillan Ltd, The Pica Press, T. & A. D. Poyser, and Swarovski UK Ltd—who have provided the prizes for the three winners and also financial assistance towards the administrative costs. We are also most grateful for the support of the Society of Wildlife Artists, the British Trust for Ornithology, the Young Ornithologists' Club, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the British Birds Rarities Committee and the British Ornithologists' Union. We are also grateful to the BTO for agreeing to host the award ceremony at its annual December Conference.

J. T. R. Sharrock (*BB*), Rob Hume (*BBRC*), B. A. E. Marr (*BOU*),
Mike Crewe (*BTO*), Robert Gillmor (*SWLA*) and Peter Holden (*YOC*)
c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3N7



ANNOUNCEMENT

January issue

In 11 months of the year, *British Birds* is mailed on the last Thursday of the month preceding the date of the issue (e.g. the November 1995 issue was despatched on 26th October).

The January issue, however, is always despatched in the middle of January: first, so that the mailing list is as complete as possible (with late resubscriptions included) and, secondly, to take account of our printers' (and our own) Christmas holiday breaks.

The January 1996 issue will be posted to subscribers on 11th January.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As well as the many people who help *BB* in a whole variety of ways, many of whose names are listed on the inside front cover each month, we should like to thank the following, who waived all or part of their photographic or artistic fees in favour of *BB*:

Richard Allen, Max Andrews, Graham Bundy, Hilary Burn, Dr Richard Chandler, Dr Euan Dunn, Jens Eriksen, Mike Everett, David Fisher, Jon Fjeldså, Robert Gillmor, Alan Harris, Ren Hathway, L. N. Hawkins, Jack Hill, D. C. Jardine, Phil Jones, Chris Knights, C. Massingham, Dave Nurney, Georges Olioso, Dan Powell, Robin Prytherch, Jan Ševčík, Dafila Scott, Brian Small, John Waldon, J. P. P. Wilczur, Christine & John Winterman, Martin Withers, and Bernard Zonfrillo. We apologise for any accidental oversight.



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Usk Barrage dumped

In July, the Severn Estuary was classified as a Special Protection Area for Birds (SPA) under the EC Birds Directive, and as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. The site, on both the English and the Welsh sides, covers in excess of 23,000 ha.

Then, on 14th September, conservation and environmental bodies, which had presented evidence at a three-month-long public inquiry early in 1994, heard the good news that William Hague, Secretary of State for Wales, had turned down plans for a barrage across the River Usk, above its confluence with the Severn estuary, in Newport, Gwent. Newport Borough Council had wanted to flood permanently the estuary's mudflats, perceived by councillors as ugly, to attract development. Mr Hague concluded, however, that the barrage proposal would cause irreversible damage to the river character, landscape and fish, and that the economic case for the barrage had not been demonstrated.

Just 20 km away, however, barrage construction across the mouth of the Taff-Ely Estuary SSSI (Cardiff Bay) has begun. This Government-promoted project, which will cost almost £200 million, aims solely to cover the mudflats, supposedly to make the area more attractive for development. Delegates at a European Union coastal conference held in Swansea in July, who visited Cardiff Bay, were horrified at the barrage proposal and could not understand how it had been sanctioned. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

More protection for Teesmouth

Following the designation of the Teesmouth area as a National Nature Reserve (see *Brit. Birds* 88: 391), the Environment Minister, James Clappison, announced that the Teesmouth and Cleveland coast, an area of some 940 ha, had now been designated a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the EC Birds Directive and as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. This brings the UK total of SPAs to 107, covering 350,000 ha, and Ramsar sites to 91, spread across 385,000 ha.

The Minister is quoted as saying: 'This is a significant ornithological site which provides a winter [*sic*] home for over 20,000 waterfowl, including Sandwich [*Sterna sandwicensis*] and Little Terns [*S. albifrons*], and I am glad to give it the recognition it deserves.' Enough said!

New National Nature Reserves for Somerset

In a joint promotion, English Nature, the Somerset Wildlife Trust and the RSPB declared three new Avalon reserves in the peat areas of Somerset. All three designations followed prolonged negotiations with the peat industry that had been extracting from the area for many years. Conservationists will decry the loss of some striking habitat over recent years, but must welcome the arrival of the reserves as some compensation. The three sites are: Shapwick Heath, to be managed by English Nature; Westhay Moor, managed by the Somerset Wildlife Trust; and Ham Wall, managed by the RSPB.

Further information is available from English Nature, Roughmoor, Bishop's Hull, Taunton, Somerset TA1 5AA.

Rare Bird Alert announces 'Wordcall Plus'

Birding technology continues to develop at an alarmingly rapid rate. No sooner do we think that we are working with the latest state-of-the-art equipment than along comes an essential innovation.

Latest news from the Rare Bird Alert team is of a highly sophisticated pager system that allows a range of facilities, including a personal message service. The 'Wordcall Plus' is capable of storing up to 231 messages and offers 14 different ways of alerting the user that a new message has arrived. (It is difficult to imagine what all those 14 might be!)

The user not only can receive all the latest bird news, from mega-rarities to early-morning and late-evening news, but also has access to a full-message personal-paging service. This means that, in a dire emergency, a personal message could ensure that you return just before reaching the mega-rarity, if you have forgotten that you are supposed to be getting married. Useful!

For details, contact Dick Filby on 01603-767799.

SOC's 60th anniversary

Next year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club. *British Birds* is delighted to send its warm congratulations and good wishes for the next 60 years and onwards. To mark the occasion, the SOC is planning a number of events during the year, including a Spring Birdwatchers' Conference at Napier College, Craiglockhart, Edinburgh, on 9th March. Anyone interested in further details is invited to contact the SOC at 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

A dream come true?

A steady, stable image with 20× magnification and no need to carry a heavy tripod? Bliss!

Carl Zeiss Ltd has announced the Zeiss Mono 20×60 S: a spotting scope small enough to be held easily in one hand and with an image-stabilisation system. So, no wobble, and no weary shoulders; but to find out the effect on the pocket, or for other further details, contact the Binocular Division of Carl Zeiss Ltd, PO Box 78, Woodfield Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 11UJ; telephone 01707 331144.

Birds instead of Birdies

The Irish Wildbird Conservancy welcomed the decision by *An Bord Pleanála*, announced at the beginning of August, to refuse permission for a golf course at Cloheen Marsh, Clonakilty, west Cork. In refusing the application, the *Bord* considered that it would materially contravene a development objective set out in the development plan for the use of the area to be primarily as an ecological habitat for wild birds.

John Coveney, IWC Conservation Officer, said that 'This decision sets an enormously important precedent for bird conservation in Ireland' and appealed to all local authorities and the DoE to ensure that this type of case never arises again.

BPY Awards

With the kind permission of the Society of Wildlife Artists, the 1995 award presentations for Bird Photograph of the Year were made immediately prior to the Bird Illustrator of the Year presentations. So, for the first time, the top bird-photographers (plate 218) rubbed shoulders with the top bird-artists at the Mall Galleries in London.

BPY was sponsored by *Canon* in 1995, and we hope soon to be able to announce the arrangements for 1996 onwards.

As usual, the closing date for entries will be 31st January.



Plate 218. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR, London, July 1995 (*Peter Wilkinson*). Left to right, Tristan Millen (The Windrush Award winner), Mike Lane (Bird Photograph of the Year winner), and Mike Wilkes (third). (Second-placed photographer, Jens Eriksen, was unable to be present.)

Reflections from France

We had arrived north of Bordeaux one day early, with the intention of getting in a little birding before the start of the serious conference business. The plan was to spend the Sunday exploring the local marshes, but sounds reaching the hotel bedroom were worrying even before tackling the breakfast. No, not the battle of the Somme, just the first day of the French hunting season. There were cars, people and gun shots everywhere. From one vantage point, a total of 2,000 shots per hour was counted. What, if anything, they hit we do not know.

It was hardly surprising that the birds that we did find were safely tucked away in the reserves of the *Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux* (LPO). The LPO must be congratulated on the work it is doing and also commended upon recently passing the 21,000 total for its membership. This is an encouraging sign, but remember: the hunters of

France total 1.5 million!

Here are a few other snippets picked up during the visit. Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans* were very abundant and very obvious amongst the Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*. There were signs of French protest against the South Pacific nuclear tests everywhere. There have been significant increases in western France of Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia*, White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* and Spotted Redshanks *Tringa erythropus*. The hunting season below high-water mark starts in mid-July. There are now 70 pairs of Sacred Ibises *Threskiornis aethiopicus* breeding wild in France (as reported in *Alanda* 62: 275-280 and *Brit. Birds* 88: 265), in a mixed colony of eight other species. It is possible to sex Spoonbills in the field by size of head and bill shape. In the last ten years, 1 km of coastline in Europe has been lost to industrial development every day.

The Fair: bigger, better and hotter

Now so well established in the ornithological calendar, the British Birdwatching Fair for 1995 hosted more events, more trade stands and more activities than ever before. This was the place to meet people, to see and to be seen. But was it hot! Stand-holders sweltered in temperatures more reminiscent of some of the holiday locations on offer, rather than mid-August in Rutland. There were competitions, prizes, special offers, lectures, panel games, demonstrations, clubs, societies and, indeed, virtually everything you could think of relating to birding. And all with one key aim

in mind: to provide money for the Moroccan Wetlands project. The organisers—Tim Appleton, Martin Davies and the whole of their team—are to be congratulated on yet another highly successful event. We are already looking forward to Rutland '96.

It was great to welcome so many of our readers to the *BB* stand, and to have so much interest in the mystery photograph competition on the three days. Congratulations to the winners: P. Palmer of Retford, Chris Derry of Pendeford and Simon Patient of Maldon, each of whom won a subscription to *BB*.

No more champagne

As announced at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water in July, *BB* has discontinued awarding the bottles of champagne which had become traditional over the past 20 years as prizes for our regular mystery photographs competitions.

We support the Polynesian, Australian and New Zealand governments' objections on environmental grounds to the French Government's testing of nuclear weapons in the Pacific, and, therefore, consider it inappropriate for us to purchase French products as prizes.

Subsequently, we have noted that French conservationists have applauded the worldwide condemnation of their Government's actions, and *BB*'s small gesture has been welcomed by our ornithological colleagues in France.

Bruce Pearson joins BIY panel

We are delighted to report that Bruce Pearson has accepted our invitation to join fellow artists Robert Gillmor, Alan Harris and Keith Shackleton on the judging panel for Bird Illustrator of the Year. Bruce himself won the BIY title in 1984, and is now the President of the Society of Wildlife Artists. (Alan Harris won the BIY title in 1982, of course, and Keith Shackleton and Robert Gillmor are both Past Presidents of the SWLA.)

As announced in October (*Brit. Birds* 88: 488), BIY is now co-sponsored by *Pica Press* and *T. & A. D. Poyser*. The closing date for entries is 15th March 1996, and artists should note the precise new dimensions of drawings for this competition (see *Brit. Birds* 88: 564).

Tenth Welsh Dipper weekend

The tenth annual 'Dipper Weekend' was held at its usual venue at Newbridge-on-Wye in mid Wales during 1st-3rd September. Volunteers from Northern Ireland, Norfolk, Slimbridge and Devon, as well as from north and south Wales, came to this popular get-together at the Newbridge Field Centre to help catch and monitor Dippers *Cinclus cinclus* and other river birds on tributaries of the Wye and Usk.

Visits to Dipper roosts continued throughout Friday evening into the early hours of Saturday, the last team arriving back at the field centre at 3 a.m. Walking and netting along rivers took place throughout Saturday and on Sunday morning, interspersed on Saturday evening with a tenth-anniversary celebratory drink and slice of cake and sojourn at the local pub.

The dry summer and low river flows may have contributed to the low proportion of young Dippers caught this year, but, by comparison, catches of young Common Kingfishers *Alcedo atthis* and Grey Wagtails *Motacilla cinerea* were good. (Contributed by Stephanie Tyler)

Save our Skylarks

Last month, we noted the campaign initiated by the BTO for raising funds to investigate the dramatic declines in our farmland birds, with particular emphasis on the Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, after which the campaign is named (*Brit. Birds* 88: 568).

It is good to be able to report that there was an immediate response from one sector of the agricultural industry, *Willmot Pertwee*, which has pledged 50p per acre (20p per ha) of their Setaside Grass Mix sold with the Cornflower Option. The seed for this comes from *Emorsgate*, which specialises in producing wild-flower seeds from UK sources.

It is estimated that rotational setaside will account for one million acres (over 400,000 ha) of the UK's farmland in 1996, much of which is left to regenerate naturally, with its share of noxious weeds. This mix has been formulated so that farmers can spray to control Black-grass *Alopecurus myosuroides*, brome *Bromus*, Wild-oat *Avena fatua* and even volunteer cereals from the previous crop. Disease carry-over from earlier crops is seen as a particular hazard from single-year setaside. Anyone wishing for further information about this seed mix can contact David Rickerby on 01476 550379.

Yellowhammers go, turtles come

The latest *Cape Clear Bird Observatory Report* (no. 23, covering 1993 and 1994) records that Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella* have now become extinct on the island, with a single record in 1993 and none whatsoever in 1994 (around 35 pairs bred annually in the 1960s).

Apart from rarities, the year's highlights were perhaps the high totals of 42 Mediterranean Shearwaters *Puffinus yelkouan* in 1993 and at least 14 Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* in early May 1994.

Turtles (mostly Leathery Turtles *Dermochelys coriacea*) have become almost commonplace. There was only one record in the Observatory's first 25 years, but then 32 'turtle-days' with up to seven in a day in 1989 and some every year since (except for a blank year in 1992), and a peak of 98 turtle-days (including 30 on one day!) in 1993.

Bookings and travel enquiries should be sent to Sean Farrell, 81 Ferndale Avenue, Dublin 11, Ireland.

Fings ain't . . .

'I was one of over one hundred birders enjoying excellent views of the Blyth's Pipit [*Anthus godlewskii*] at Landguard. Whilst making several sketches of the bird I became aware of an equally rare sight on the common that day; as far as I could see there appeared to be only one other person actively using their notebook to record their observations . . . Since [then] I have kept a casual eye out for people using notebooks in the field and I have been rather surprised by the number of people who never seem to use one. As far as I am concerned a notebook is just as vital a piece of equipment as your bins and 'scope and you shouldn't leave home without it.'

So says Stuart Ling in his Editorial in *The Harrier* (104: 1-2), the Suffolk Ornithologists' Group's excellent bulletin. We agree wholeheartedly with his final sentence quoted above.

For membership details of the SOG, write to Andrew Gregory, 1 Holly Road, Ipswich IP1 3QN.

BIY Awards

Courtesy of the Society of Wildlife Artists, the traditional award presentations were made at a Press Reception at the Mall Galleries in London on 26th July 1995 (plate 219).

As usual, there was a happy gathering, including bird-book publishers and many of Britain's top artists, so the opportunity was taken to obtain a photograph of over a dozen previous winners of the title Bird Illustrator of

the Year—almost a who's who of today's well-known bird-artists (plate 220).

This year was the last of seven valuable and much-appreciated years of sponsorship by *Kowa* telescopes. As already announced (*Brit. Birds* 88: 488), the co-sponsors from 1996 onwards will be *Pica Press* and *T. & A. D. Poyser*.



Plate 219. BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, London, July 1995 (Peter Wilkinson). Left to right, Dan Powell (third), Max Andrews (The Richard Richardson Award winner), Tim Worfolk (second) and Andrew Stock (Bird Illustrator of the Year winner).



Plate 220. BIRD ILLUSTRATORS OF THE YEARS, London, July 1995 (Peter Wilkinson). Back row, left to right: David Cook, Martin Woodcock (1983), George Woodford, Norman Arlott (1980 & 1981), Chris Rose (1986), Andrew Stock (1995), John Cox (1989), Martin Hallam (1988), Ren Hathway (1994) and Bruce Pearson (1984). Front row: David Quinn (1987), Alan Harris (1982), Richard Allen (1993), Ian Lewington (1985) and Gordon Trunkfield (1990). The only missing winners were the late Crispin Fisher (1979), John Davis (1991) and John Gale (1992).

ID papers coming up

Scheduled for publication soon in *BB* are major identification papers on *Hippolais* warblers, the separation of Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* from Bicknell's Thrush *C. bicknelli*, and Little Crake *Porzana parva* from Baillon's Crake *P. pusilla*, and the identification of Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans* in Britain, the first three illustrated by Alan Harris and the fourth by David Quinn.

REGIONAL NEWS TEAM

Dave Allen—*Northern Ireland*
 Tim Cleeves—*Northeast*
 David Clugston—*Scotland*
 Dave Flumm—*Southwest*
 Barrie Harding—*East Anglia*
 Oran O'Sullivan—*Republic of Ireland*
 Alan Richards—*Midlands*
 Don Taylor—*Southeast*
 Dr Stephanie Tyler—*Wales*
 John Wilson—*Northwest*



MONTHLY MARATHON



The seventh 'Marathon' was won by Peter Sunesen (*Brit. Birds* 88: 560), who joins the elite band of expert bird-identifiers who have won SUNBIRD holidays: Pekka J. Nikander (who chose to go to Thailand), Anthony McGeehan (Arctic Canada), Ralph Hobbs (Kenya), Martin Helin (Hong Kong), Hannu Jännes (Thailand) and

Paul Archer (who has not yet selected his trip).

The first three stages of the new, eighth 'Monthly marathon' were in the September, October and November issues (plates 126, 140 and 198) with a deadline for receipt of entries of 15th December 1995, so the solutions to those will all be given next month. The fourth hurdle appears below (plate 221).



Plate 221. 'Monthly marathon'. Photo no. 114: fourth stage in eighth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules on page 65 of the January issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th January 1996.



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeelian

This summary covers the period 16th October to 12th November 1995.

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Little Auk *Alle alle* Strong northerly passage along east-facing coasts involving several thousands, with a few individuals reaching midland English counties from about 29th October.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* St Mary's (Scilly), 19th October; Morpeth (Northumberland), 22nd October.

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor* St Ives (Cornwall), 12th November.

Cliff Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota* Kilnsea/Spurn area (Humberside), 22nd-23rd October and 28th October.

Blyth's Pipit *Antlius godlewskii* Loop Head (Co. Clare), 31st October to 1st November (first record for Ireland).

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* Great Orme (Gwynedd), 18th-20th October.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* Fair Isle (Shetland), 19th October.

Veery *C. fuscescens* North Uist (Western Isles), 20th to at least 28th October.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* Influx of at least 52, including 14 in Kent, six in Norfolk and four in Ireland, from 23rd October.

Willow Tit *Parus montanus* Cork City (Co. Cork), 11th November (first record for Ireland).

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* Single in off the sea at Dungeness (Kent), on 2nd November.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* Llanddeusant, Anglesey (Gwynedd), 3rd-8th November and 12th November.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* St David's (Dyfed), 27th October.

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator* Margate (Kent), 19th October.

Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica* Prawle Point (Devon), 18th October.

Blackpoll Warbler *D. striata* St Agnes (Scilly), 27th October to 2nd November and 6th November; Kenidjack Valley (Cornwall), 29th October.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Phencticus ludovicianus* Ventnor (Isle of Wight), 30th October to 1st November.

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* St Mary's, 20th October.



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CORRECTIONS

VOLUME 88

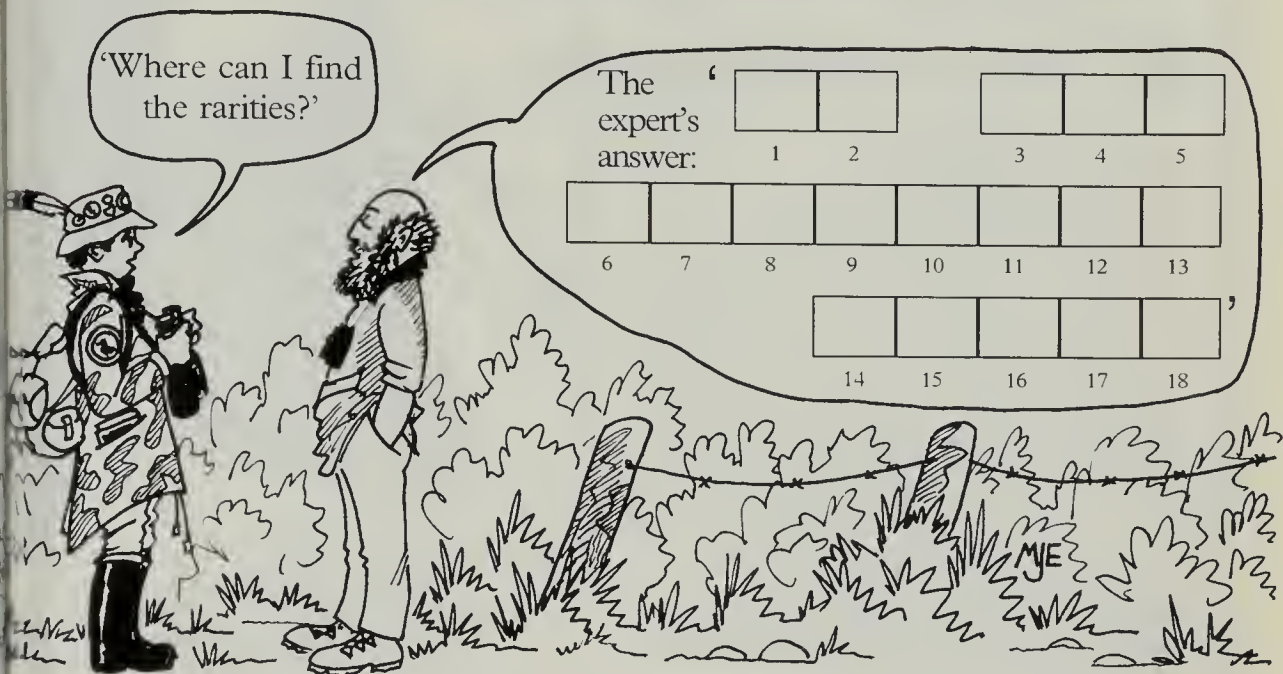
- 15-25 'Iceland Gulls from the "Braer" disaster, Shetland 1993.' Page 21, in footnote, definition of bursa should read 'Pouch on wall of cloaca found only in very young birds'; page 22, 'Discussion', line 15: 'one' should read 'none'.
- 136-140 'Kentish Plovers with complete breast bands.' Scientific name of Chestnut-banded Plover is *Charadrius pallidus*; nominate race occurs in southern Africa, while the East African race is *C. p. venustus*. Page 138, Plates 34 & 35: '*C. venustus*' should read '*C. pallidus*'; table 1: '*C. venustus*' should read '*C. pallidus*'.
- 145 'Ages of Great Spotted Cuckoos in Britain and Ireland.' Fig. 2: penultimate histogram block (mid October) should show 3, not 2.
- 449 'Binoculars and telescopes survey 1995.' Table 3, 1990 position, line 3, '-' should replace '(1)'.

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Christmas puzzle

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6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18			

Solve the five clues (below) and enter your answers in the five grids. Then transfer each letter to the appropriate numbered squares (above) to find the expert's answer.

NOTE Each number represents the same letter every time that it is used, but each letter is not necessarily always given the same number.

1. Not a hopping finch (nine letters)

11	13	10	11	1	2
----	----	----	----	---	---

2. Spots congregations in tickly spot out West (eight letters)

3	14	3	4	5	15
---	----	---	---	---	----

3. Drunk when lacking grit, but famous one's bred here (ten letters)

15	6	13	7	17	16	9
----	---	----	---	----	----	---

4. European bird found on lawns (six letters)

13	7	12	13
----	---	----	----

5. Sunless souvenirs of which we have had 82 up to 1994 (six letters)

8	1	13	18	7	16
---	---	----	----	---	----

Send the expert's four-word answer on a postcard to *The Famous Grouse* Christmas puzzle, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by the closing date of 15th January 1996. Do not forget to include your name and address. The senders of the first *three* correct answers drawn after the closing date will each win a bottle of *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky.

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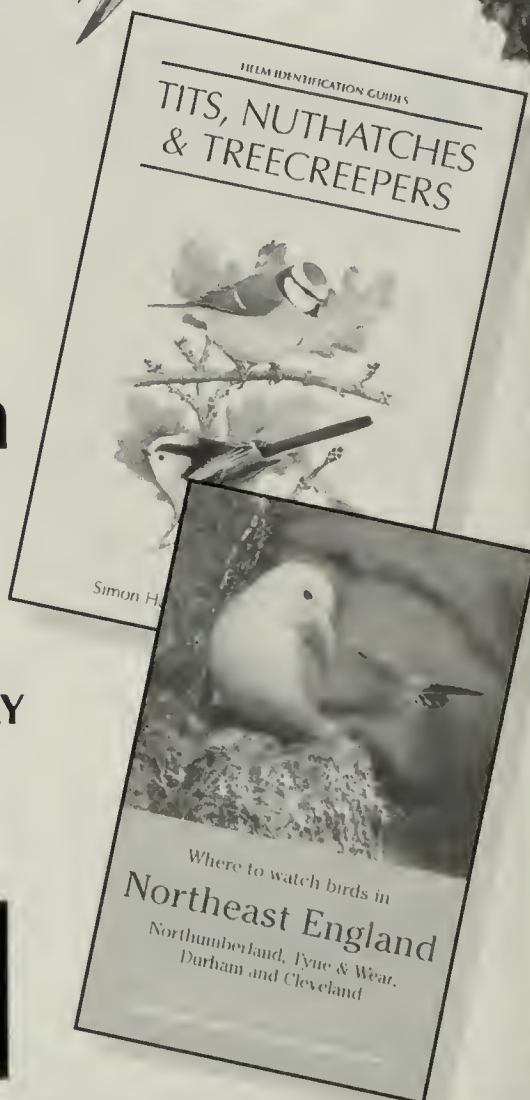
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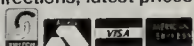
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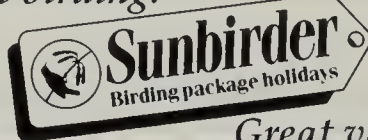
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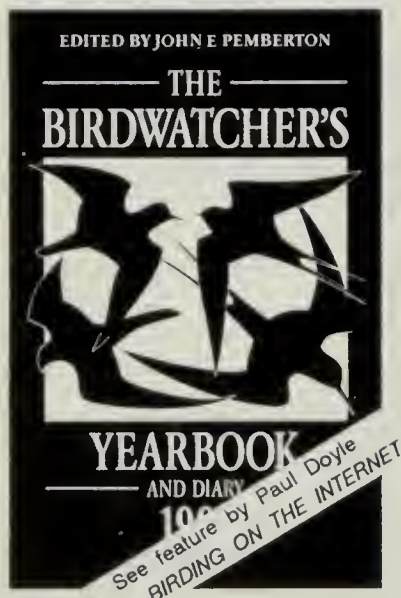
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Compiled by M. A. Ogilvie

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(2) scientific nomenclature under generic name only and following *The 'British Birds' List of English Names of Western Palearctic Birds* (1993);

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